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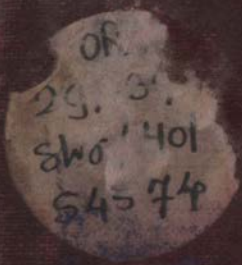
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THE HOLY SYMBOLS.

By

Jamsetji Dadabhoy Shroff,

Author of The Holy Fire.

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1918.

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Soar ye upwards as the Fire soars.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE.
INTRODUCTION		
Part I		i to xii
Part II		xiii to xxix
THE HOLY FIRE.		
CHAP.		
I	Spiritual Joy	3
II	The Inner Sanctuary of Fire	19
III	Aspects of Fire... ...	21
IV	Esoteric Teaching ...	50
V	Can Fire be painted ? ...	52
VI	The Philosophy of Fire	57
2	The Lotus	70
3	The Crescent	104
4	The Cross	130
5	Conclusion	154

DEDICATION.

Dedicated to my beloved parents, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of their marriage, in humble and grateful appreciation of all that they have been to me.

J. D. S.

30th January 1918.

INTRODUCTION.

Part I.

Symbology is a primordial verity. If God is the *idee*, His Kosmos is the *hylo*, the latter being the Symbol of the former. There is no symbol but it enshrines an idea under it. For example, on page 105 of J. Yarker's *Arcane Schools*, a ball of wool is emblematic of the thread of life; Gutta=Fecundity; Sesame=Fertility; Water=Creation; Wine=Life; Olive leaf=Spirit; Wavy Line=Water on which the Spirit acts. (=*Nârâyanâ*.)

Freemasonry is the latest champion of Symbols;—one of them being the Jewel of a Royal Arch Mason, composed

of the Circle, with two interlaced Triangles within, crowned by the Sun. The Sun symbolizes the Creator; the Interlaced Triangles, the elements of Fire and Water; and the Circle, Eternity and Infinity.

Turning now to the Discus (the *Chakra* of Vishnu), it may be noted as the type arcane and archaic (the prototype) of the Masonic Jewel above described; and flames of Fire added to it. Hence the

Sudarsâna (wheel) is *jvâlâ-mâlin* (*i.e.* Flame-festooned).

If now two diameters crossing each other, one being perpendicular to the two bases of the Interlaced Triangles, and the other centrally parallel to these bases, are drawn, we get the Cross.

The Circle may now be whirled round the perpendicular or the horizontal line, through an angle of 90 degrees. This will give us a hemisphere, any section of which giving us a Crescent (Sector). Revolved 180 degrees, it gives us the sphere; any section of which giving a Circle. The Sphere is the Kosmos. The Cross beginning to move in any direction, gives the *Svastika*, an educt from the Cross, the offsets of the former indicating the direction.

The Sphere with flames of Fire all round, is thus a Universal Symbol which includes all other part-symbols. And this Cosmic Sphere is also symbolised by the *Lotus*. The Lotus is thus a Symbol which could be found more or less treated of in all the World-Scriptures; and in India (particularly to Hinduism),

it is specially significant inasmuch as the Lotus flower finds its Central Life by the Sun, and it flourishes in India alone in all its full luxuriance.

Hence when Sri Krishna incarnated, the Vishnu Purâna tells us :—

Tatokhila-jagat-Padma-
bodhây-Achyuta-bhânunâ,

i.e. 'Here is the Eternal Sun born that the Cosmos-Lotus may blow.' And it is a natural fact that no Lotus opens without the Sun.

Of all the diversity of flowers that we have so far seen on earth, the construction and form and varieties of the Lotus intuitively prompt man to adopt it for a Great Symbol. So it is *de facto.*

And then its form before blossoming to the rays of the Sun, is like the Heart. We have the Upanishad reading :—

Padma-kos'a-pratîkâs'am
*Hrdayan ch-âpy adhomukham.**

The lotus thus represents the Heart of the Universe. We have thus the Lotus Symbol as both metaphysically and ethically (*i. e.* aesthetically) represented. The Heart of all hearts is God,—the Immanent Principle, the *Antaryâmin*. So says the Upanishad :—

tasya madhye vahni-s'ikhâ &c.†

And then this Lotus, this Cosmos-Lotus, has its genesis in the Vishnu's

* *i. e.*, "The Heart is like the Lotus unblown, and pointing downward."

† *i. e.*, "In its (Heart's) midst is the Flame of the Fire."

navel. The Navel-Lotus is the birth-place of the Demiurge—the four-faced Brahmâ (Consult Rig-Veda, *passim*). In this connection the embryological facts of the placenta resembling a lotus, and the umbilical cord proceeding from it on the mother's side, and entering into the navel of the fœtus on the child's side, is worthy of reflection.

The Lotus in bud resembles by its form and color, flames of Fire tapering upwards. Without Fire we would have a life-less Universe. Hence Fire is the Spirit of God, which keeps alive what otherwise would be an inert mass. And this symbol is the arche-type of the Aryan Race of which the Hindus and the Parsis are the nearest blood-kin. Atharvan (*Athravan* = the Fire-Priest) is our Common Ancestor; and

no ritual can take place amongst us without the Fire. A special paper: *Esoterique of Fire,* has been written by me* and this may be consulted. And it is most absorbingly interesting to note here what Goethe the great German sage did:—

> "After much pondering, he (Goethe) found that he had to perform a *fire-*sacrifice; that he had to get the fire for it from the Sun itself; and that the appropriate fuel would be neither wood nor coal, but incense-sticks, because—in his own words—'this gentle burning and evaporating seemed much better to express what is happening in the mind, than an open flame.' So he took a small table, fastened on it some incense-sticks,

* Read Journal of the Iranian Association, October, November and December 1917.

and kindled these by means of a burning glass, as soon as the Sun (which had already risen a considerable time) appeared over the roofs of the neighbouring houses." [P. 4. *The Religion of Goethe*, by Dr. F. Otto Schräder]. This may be compared with the processes employed by the Hindus and the Parsis for extracting sacred Fire.

The Lotus with Fire and Triange &c. emblematic of the Heart, and indicating God as the Heart of all Hearts, are all conceived together in the act of worship, conducted by the Brâhmanas thus :—

'*Hrd-ambuje tri-konam rakta-varnam Ram ity Agni-bîjam dhyâtvâ tad-utth-Agni-jvâlâbhih samasta-pâpam ddhet.*' [P. 4. Bhagavadâradhana prayoga.] *i. e.* "Conceive the seed-

letter of Fire, viz., *Ram*, of red-color, Triangle-form, in the Lotus of the Heart. Let flames (*Smokeless*, according to the 'Ahirbudhnya-Samhitā') be evoked therefrom, which shall consume all sins."

Fire is thus the Son or the Logos of the Sun. Fire is derived from the Sun. Hence worship of the Sun has been an ethnic custom almost; *Mithra* is the common visible Symbol of the Deity in the cult of the Brāhmanas and of the Māgas, in particular. The Sun and the Moon, as representing the Solar and the Lunar measures of Eternal Time (=*S'esha*, on whom *Nârâyana*, the Eternal Spirit reclines), are Eternal Symbols invoked as Witnesses by the Hindus at every act they perform. The Sun is represented by the symbol *Chakra* (or the Wheel-Jewel of the Royal

Arch Mason) as said before, and the Moon by the Crescent. Hence the Crescent with the Hindus is a Masonic Symbol whereas with the Turks, it was adopted for depiction on their Standard when they took Constantinople in 1453. It would appear that the Moon rose and lighted the Turks to win a victory, which otherwise they would not have won. So it would seem that with the Moslems, it has more a historic, than mystic significance.

It will thus appear from the foregoing remarks how Ancient India, the Mother of Religions, is the Father of Symbols as well ; and all Universal Symbols thus rightly referring to India as its original Home.

There remains now another Symbol, a few remarks on which may fitly find

a place here. It is the Symbol *S'ankha* (Conch), which is borne by Vishnu in His left up-turned hand, while His right up-lifted hand bears the *Chakra* (Wheel). The former is emblematic of Space—and therefore all the varieties of vibrations, of which ether forms the basis, which find their play in it, and which build the spatial Universe; and the latter (*Chakra* = Wheel) being emblematic of Time, and hence the parent of all events, meaning the great principle of Causation constituted of antecedents and consequents in a never-ending chain, thus co-ordinating with the Spatial Universe of the Wheel in producing the Temporal Universe. For elaborate expositions of these themes, I must refer readers to the *Pâncha-*

râtra or the *Bhagavat-S'astra* [See my paper in the J. R. A. S. October 1911], and other works, *e. g.* the *Vishnu-Purâna*, and my own particular Chapter on "Symbolism" in the *Lives of the Drâvida Saints.*

In these days of mechanic monotony, and soul-killing boredom, it does one good to allow his soul-force to free itself from the humdrum of life and soar in contemplation of Divine Symbols masking Divine Truths.

With this Introduction (which I am afraid, is already long), I usher Mr. J. D. Shroff's *The Holy Symbols* into the world.

Part II.

A careful perusal of this book will elucidate how the sentiment of devotion inspired different forms of worship of the one God and how its concomitant art and symbol irradiated into rituals betokening many a universal principle in singular ways of expression.

It is needless to reiterate how different forms of worship in their turn gave rise to various sects and a parafle* of ceremonies of distinct character. Howbeit, these symbols and ceremonies point to identical aims in the ultimate, providing as they do an unmistakable beacon to complicated religious speculations which have drifted into elaborate observances of a schismatic character.

Palpably Hindu rituals so perfectly resemble that of the Parsis, in priests and prayers, shrines and temples, that in a

* See THE ANTIQUARY by Scott, for this word.

spectacular view one will be tempted to call them as almost identical. Factitiously speaking 'the Devil had piously framed an anticipatory counterfeit, the genuine article to appear later on.' One coalescing feature between the Brâhmana and the Parsi in all religious ceremonies is the one profoundly significant analogue of the sacred thread and the iteration of formulæ working celestial influences. Although the Parsi religious sentiment, as did others in their fervour, developed into a different system of creed, distinct metaphysics and congenial speculations, they drift into ever the same point of Vedism as I have tried to explain of this possibility in my Book on *Mazdaism in the light of Vishnuism*. However, it is a very significant sign of the times that a compromising tendency has salubriously entered into us; the Parsi,

the Sufi, and the Hindu evincing a desire to meet on a common platform and discuss each of his own religious avowals with a feeling of genial warmth, not as of old truculently asserting his own superiority with *soi disant* superciliousness. In the present attempt, the author (J. D. Shroff) has evidently given accent to this compromising tendency in a air view of the Symbols of the Hindu Lotus, the Parsi Fire, the Christian Cross, the Muhammadan Crescent, as equally maintainable and as being supremely unmistakable representations of the worship of the one God through a lotus, a Fire, a Cross or a Crescent for 'the mighty Lord himself is indescribable. He is a Fiery Mass burning on for ever.' He is the pathetic Cross of the Christian, the Divine Crescent of the Muhammadan, the superb Lotus of the Hindu, aye He

is whatever devout man conceives as the best token for worship of Him who is All-Pervading—the Fire of the Parsi.

An attempt has been made, in the following treatise, to show what environments are necessary to make temples congenial to rapt worship and contemplation. The author's own conclusions, from an æsthetic point of view, are not without justification as his impressions eminently emphasise the necessity of having one object in the temple to effect rapt concentration of devotional thoughts and I may concurrently add that a 'distrait' attitude as Prof. Bergson would call it, would be eminently possible, only when the mind can be treated with an entire absence of any other object of disturbance in the sanctuary. The glare of an electric lamp, as the author says, near the devo-

tional fire in the Parsi temple is not only inartistic but eggregiously distractive. As a collateral idea the custom prevailing in Hindu temples to effect a holy Silence in the sanctuary during the time of various phases of worship and to absolutely shut out the least external element of discordant sound is supremely interesting. E. g., the incessant twang and clang of clear sounding bells which reverberate through the echoing rocky canopy, sends through every nerve and artery, violent galvanic vibrations holding the fervent devotee in a weird fascination and devotional charm. Whatever had been the underlying esoterics in the ringing of bells in Hindu temples, we may now surmise that in view of the impracticability of maintaining temple surroundings infusive of spontaneous fervour, the system of ringing bells, how-

ever rude in other points of view, is specially justifiable in the utilitarian aspect. As a general population cannot be expected to have highly developed æsthetic sense nor the soft strains of the music of flowers nor the artistic scenery around as holding any influence over them, forcibly impressive methods are rightly instituted as being the more purposeful than any of the softer character.

To return from the digression : Fire symbolizing as the nearest Symbol of God is the dominant idea in the following treatise, although other symbols receive none the less abundant treatment. A careful perusal of the pages of *The Holy Symbols* is eminently well worth one's trouble as it gives a compact grasp of the esoterics of the most prominent succedanea existing among the great religions of the world.

Again the spiritual influences evident in the Fire Symbol may not be exclusively Parsi as it is also equally claimable by the Vedic Hindu as well as of the Hindu of the present day. The idea that Fire is a powerful embodiment of the Divine is emphatically more familiar to a Hindu than to any other nation. It is treated not merely as a passing Symbol of Divine worship but supremely looked upon as a Personal Deity—as the very Dêva present, here and now, before Whom is sanctified every ceremony, festive or obsequial. Agni-Dêva as the ever living entity, is an unerring witness of every sacred marriage and other important social function in a Hindu household. It is recorded that away in those days, Aryan Rishis never carried fire to their places but brought it down from heaven by fervent prayers.

We are also told that Prometheus discovered and revealed to man the art of bringing down Lightning and by the method which he taught them they brought down Fire from above.

These things may seem incredible, but as we are not capable of understanding all the processes of nature, it would be highly supercilious to deny a phenomenon because it happens to be inexplicable in the state of our information. Our duty, therefore, lies mainly in examining these circumstances with a mind as scrupulous as it seems difficult to admit them.

The Brâhmana has brought Fire into such a practical medium of conveying his prayers and sacrifices to 'the High, throned all heights above' that nothing

important takes place in his house without Fire placed in his presence.

One point more than any other seems here necessary to convince our sceptical friends as to how through an inanimate fire our prayers may be transmitted to the Supreme High and how that intangible, remote and infinite Being—God, can respond to a mundane creature whose puny voice can scarcely be audible but a few yards off. Yes, it were difficult to argue this point to a successful issue in the days gone by. But at the present day, who is there so stupid as not to believe in the phenomena of the existence of a practical medium for transmitting messages to distant places—the medium almost superseding the familiar telegraphic system of continued

wires and pillars? Does any man in these days require to be told of the enormous advance of practical science, and how nature's profound secrets which were once not even conceivable in the high flights of one's imagination are now brought within the range of human experience? On the other hand, the Psychic Society of America recording wonderful workings of spirit mediums really borders upon the marvellous. But the principle working in these prodigies of reality are enough for our purpose to argue equal feasibility of transmitting invisible waves of thought through the æther (or otherwise) to the unknown All-pervading Power and cause it to intensify in a manner proportionate to the strength which we give to the waves by the intensity of our Devotion. 'Man's powers of observation

have been multiplied by artificial means and his skill has been intensified by practice on the registration and comparison of vital phenomena. Even so it appears evident that we are only at the beginning of our discoveries so that what is known now would seem to bear an infinitesimal ratio to that which is still to be known.'

Now one conception of God may be an Eternal and Infinite Substance as never consumed but ever consuming. Fire is the most perfect reflection of the one flame on earth as it is in Heaven. It is not only the Parsi or the Hindu but even the nomadic savage tribes of America are said to proclaim themselves

born of fire. Not only born of Fire,* the Hindu *Yogis* evoke fire in their bodies, and burn themselves with it when their appointed time on earth draws to a close. †

Drawing in once more the tension I gave to my sentiments revelling as I did in a glow and warmth for fire-worship, I feel once more that Lotus is a very important symbol embodying in it world-principles. I cannot dismiss it without saying that it is galore with vastly interesting esoteric mean-

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* Read the *Panch-âgni Vidyâ* in the Upanishads; or the Science of the *Five Fires*. Says Louis Figuier in his *Day after Death*:—"The worship of Fire has reigned from time immemorial in Asia, and especially in ancient Persia. From the Persian Shores sailed the first peoples, the Aryas or Aryans, who occupied and peopled Europe. Fire Worship was the first religion of ancient Asia." Read also Burnauf's *Science of Religions*.

† Read the examples in the *Ramayana*, for example.

ings. Need I say that in the following pages the author has done more than full justice to it and the information he has been able to gather on this theme is fascinating. He discusses the subject under seventeen well-defined aspects.

Reflecting upon the Crescent and the Cross—those profound symbols of the Muhammadan and the Christian respectively, I am reverently tempted to say that these Symbols are not unfamiliar to the Hindu as they have their very origin in Hindu theological paraphernalia, though they are slightly different in the purpose for which they are designed. In this connection it may be that the student of Christianity or of Muhammadanism need but look to Hinduism (*i.e.* Vedism) in its pure ritualistic aspect

for what is to be the Crown* of their religions. But powerful time will reveal this happy consummation as scientific education expands and advances and in its influence people's minds are absolutely purged of all aplomb and prejudice. This consummation will not be far off but will be the sooner in proportion as Hindu religious literature and Theology find their way into that nation, the Kshatriya aspect of which is accentuating itself over India, the motherland of religions, at the present day. This Kshatriya aspect was of old predominant in the Persian (Parsi).

All these random remarks may seem superfluous, but I may be excused on the ground that I have drawn my conclusions from the trend of thought that earnest

* Not as Mr. J. Fanquhar says that Christianity is to be the *Crown* of Hinduism ! ?

savants of modern school of research have been in the travail of discovering and may give forth to the world with the hall-mark of science and research, what may merely be already existing in the Vedâs and the Avesta as it has been from times nearly out of memory and what it will be in advance of many centuries, nay, infinite time to come. Vedism, dormant *per se* seems to possess the vital spark * and may be content to come into notice only slowly like the sprout of a tiny pine seed in a field overgrown with weeds. Enough of these reflections, and now let me lift the curtain that hangs behind me and reveal to you the author waiting on the stage with Fire brilliantly blazing, involving mysteries in its flames, the beautiful Lotus embodying the representations of

* To wit : Dr. Jagadis Chandra Bose's experiments

Divine principles, "the fascinating heavenly orb (the Crescent) the symbol of hope without which human life would hardly be worth living," and the Cross—aye, the child of Svastika of the Egyptian and the Aryan—full of symbolic significations and living in the form of the very base of the Temple of Vishnu in the ever sacred Benares,* a fact nearer home to us; while my Christian Brother Lawrence and I remain and wait to see that "all things are possible to him who *believes*, that they are less difficult to him who *hopes*, they are more easy to him who *loves*, and still more easy to him who *perseveres* in the practice of

* The Bindu Madhava Temple.

these virtues, that the end we ought to propose to ourselves is to become, in this life, the most perfect worshippers of God we can possibly be, as we hope to be, through all eternity."

A. GOVINDÂCHARYA SVAMIN,
M. R. A. S.; M. R. S, A. &c.,
Vîdyâbhûshana, Vedântaratna.

Maisûr,
1st January 1918.

THE HOLY FIRE.

"I pervade all things in nature, and guard them with my *beams*."

Bhagvad Gita.

"Hear ye with the ears;
Behold ye the *flames* with the Best Mind;
Faith's choices must ye now fix,
For yourselves, man and man deciding;
The great concern is at hand,
To this our teaching awake ye!"

Yasna XXX,
Mills' 'Gathas.'

"The mighty Lord himself is indescribable. *He* s a *fiery mass* burning on for ever."

"Dante Papers."
Dr. J. J. Mody.

"Whoever spoils my estates, and does not choose me by *bowing before my fire* (**the symbol of the deity**), retribution may be made to him for his person in the same way. He shall be excluded from every good possession, but not from a bad one filled up with evils, O Mazda!"

Gatha Ushtavaiti,
Haug's "Essays on the Parsis."

CHAPTER I.

SPIRITUAL JOY.

The lowest order of joy is the joy of the flesh, which fades fast like a flower and crumbles quickly to dust like the Dead-Sea Apple. It is the joy of the beasts. It soon runs its course and consumes itself leaving behind in its place nothing but disappointment and spiritual stagnation.

Higher in order of joys is the intellectual joy. The appetite for this grows with what it feeds on, and man has but recently begun to share it with the immortals. If we can divest Shri Krishna's eloquent philosophy in the

Bhagvad-Gita of its metaphysical subtleties we find that He exhorts Arjuna to learn Wisdom. It is not therefore the peculiar privilege of the gods only to participate in the manifold joys which nature reveals, but man has also learnt to be impressed by its eternity and infinity and in awe and reverence has gone to His Shrine, made obeissance and worshipped Him.

* Lastly there is spiritual joy, the highest of all, that "Joy of Joys" which the great Gnani calls "Santhosam, santhosam, eppodum †" To attain this the disciple has to concentrate his attention with such steady devotion that he slowly enters into *Contemplation*. The more he enters into

* The fourth Joy of Action I have treated elsewhere in a foot-note.

† Joy always joy.

contemplation, the feeling of self-consciousness becomes proportionately less, till he entirely forgets himself and his surroundings, time and space begin to vanish and become only relative terms, the difference between him and the entire animate and inanimate creation dwindles down to vanishing point, and then dawns on him that incomprehensible glory of the ever-existing Now, Past and Future are all merged into the everlasting Present, distance and space are all drowned in one indivisible infinity, differences of castes, creeds and religions seem to him non-existent and his divine little self merges into the all-pervading Universal-Self. The Mahar and the Brahmin then merely appear to be different links in one unending chain. He then begins to

attain that *'Nirvanah'-like** joy which is perfect rest and peace, which once acquired is never lost. All the Mahatmas, Rishis, Gnanis, and prophets have in their times attained it and glorified it in terms of the highest praise. Thus Buddha after days of contemplation underneath the fig-tree promulgated his laws of pity, peace, love, virtue and joy to the multitude, and Zarathustra in his time, after contemplating the beams of fire, told the assembly the wise sayings of Mazda, the praises of Ahura and the hymns of the good Spirit, the sublime truth which he saw arising out of the sacred flames. "You shall

* Nirvanah according to all intelligent Buddhists and even according to the well-known Chinese orator Wong-Chin-Fu is the condition which we all understand to mean "a final reunion with God, coincident with the perfection of the human spirit by its ultimate disembarrassment of matter"—Isis Unveiled.

therefore hearken to the soul of nature; * *Contemplate the beams of Fire with a most pious mind!* Every one, both men and women, ought to-day to choose his creed between the Deva and the Ahura religion. Ye offsprings of renowned ancestors, awake to agree with us, to be delivered to you at this moment."† Zarathustra then delivered the words revealed to him through the sacred flames. In the holy beams of fire he saw the origin of the pair of twins, the good and the evil, and exhorted his hearers to choose the Good and reject the Evil. Thus for our supreme spiritual happiness our Lord exhorts us in Yasna XXX

* This only refers to agriculture in the Gathas and is supposed to have no deep mystical meaning.

† Haug's "Essays on the Parsis."

"To contemplate the *beams* of fire with a most pious mind.*

Now these beams of fire when gazed upon in pious contemplation supply enough spiritual food for thought and reflection. Every aspect of the holy beam has its own heavenly message to give and carries us nearer our Lord than any other conceivable object through which man can hold communion with God. For man having but physical eyes must have a Symbol through which alone he can see the highest manifestations of his Creator. "In the Symbol proper, what we can call a Symbol," says Carlyle, "there is ever, more or less distinctly and directly, some embodiment and revelation of the Infinite; the Infinite is made to blend itself with the

*Erwad Kanga and Khan Bahadur Khandalawalla of Poona translate this from the original in a different way. I am inclined to accept the interpretation of Dr. Haug.—J.D.S.

Finite, to stand visible, and as it were, attainable there. By Symbols accordingly, is man guided and commanded, made happy, made wretched."* Every great religion has its symbol, through which alone its followers can distinctly find some embodiment and revelation of the Infinite.† Be it the mystical Cross or the heavenly Crescent, the godly Lotus or the holy Fire, man must have before him some kind of material object in order to acquire spiritual insight. Even in the Bhagvad Gita we find Shri Krishna supplanting Arjuna's helpless physical eyes with spiritual ones and making him see the

*"Man is a worshipping being; adoration is the very life of his nature as a rational creature. Symbolism has spirituality in it; and as the French writer and philosopher Labatier has said, the world is symbolic not scientific."—Sir Narayen Chandavarkar's letter to the author—30-4-15.

†Sartor Resartus. Carlyle.

different divine aspects of His Own Incarnation. "But as thou art unable to see with these thy mortal eyes, I will give thee a heavenly one, with which behold my divine connection." It was a sight worthy of Arjuna, who was entrusted by Shri Krishna to change for the better the whole history of mankind. "The glory and amazing splendour of the mighty being may be likened to the rising at once of the Sun into the heavens with a thousand times more than usual brightness." Thus Arjuna could see His divine countenance with a heavenly eye and found it an inconceivably mighty orb of splendour and *Fire*. Thus even in the most ancient Aryan literature God is likened to the Sun which is one resplendant mass of fire.

Now let us come to our divine Message which exhorts us to "contem-

plate the beams of Fire with a most pious mind." A little thinking will tell us that unless we make the sacred fire "the point of concentration" we might contemplate the beams as long as we like and yet get no spiritual vision from it. In all the paintings of the Great Masters we find this law of the "point of concentration" always held sacred. For instance, if in the painting of the Madonna the body of the Virgin be apparelled with a garment of such exquisite folds of flowing tenderness or the surroundings be made so enchanting as to distract but for a moment our attention from her divine and inspiring face that instant the artistic value of the whole picture is lost, because it has been deprived of its most essential feature—its point of concentration. So unless our sacred fire be kept in such surroundings as to make the fire the point of

concentration, the whole force of the Message of our Lord will be lost.

That crystallized tear, the divine Taj Mahal, which is but frozen music, if deprived of its picturesque surroundings, will cease to float in space and lose its ethereality immediately. "The Taj with its surroundings is a spot of unequalled beauty, the heroic size, the wonderful contrast of colours in the materials employed, the setting of noble trees, sweet shrubs and clear water, form a combination that we seek in vain elsewhere."* Thus the Taj by itself would hardly convey any lesson to us without its setting of noble trees, especially the cypresses†—which were

* 'Murray's guide.'

† "The Persian Poet Hafez moralizes on a cypress thus:—Whosoever is straight and righteous gets no reward in this world just as the stately cypress neither bears flowers nor fruits. He like this noble tree is only in communion with his God.

once there in profusion—sweet shrubs and clear water. Now in all our "Atash-Behrams" and "Agiaris" we sadly miss this necessary setting. Here at least the Taj and the Temple differ. But consciously or unconsciously the inner construction of our fire-temple closely resembles the most brilliantly thought out plan of the Taj." "In the apartment above where the show tombs are, the light," says Ferguson, the well-known authority on architecture, "is admitted only through double screens of white marble trellis-work of the most exquisite design, one on the outer and one on the inner surface of the walls." This was required to temper the glare that otherwise would have been intolerable. Now in all our fire-temples, we have an outward verandah running all round the building,

so that the outside glare and noise may be partially subdued. Just inside this verandah we have a big hall to further temper and filter the light and the noise, and right in the centre, exactly as in the apartment of the dead in the Taj or after the manner in which according to the Vedanta our Soul—the divine spark—is enveloped in the three 'Shariras," is kept the holy fire—the spiritual link which connects our historic past with our promising future.* Here we see the holy fire

* In 1914 Dr. Jivanji Mody wrote to me as follows :—

"You must remember one thing that both according to Herodotus and according to the ancient sculptures, the ancient Fire-temples were not so shut up as the present ones. So your devotional remarks about the inner dark room would not apply to the old temples."

"We have already seen that Avesta speaks of some sacred fires consecrated by the pre-Zoroastrian kings

ever burning and perennially pointing its flames heavenward. Now keep but one single bright light in the centre-hall or in the sanctuary and all artistic beauty is totally lost. The 'point of concentration' of every devotee, which is fire, is shifted, the attention of the worshipper is drawn away from the light of the fire to the glare of the lamp, and concentration on fire is thereby made hopelessly impossible. Electric or any

in Iran, The Avestan works refer to the *daitya gatu*, 'proper place' for the fire, and the old Persian Inscriptions speak of the Ayadanâ, as the places for worship. Herodotus, the earliest of the Greek writers on Persia, however informs us that the Persians did not erect temples in his days, but sacrificed unto the elements sun, moon, earth, fire, water and wind on the summits of mountains. Dino the contemporary of Alexander does not mention the fire-temples and says that the Persians worshipped in the open air." "Strabo for the first time mentions in Cappadocia places dedicated to fire, and speaks of enclosures with fire-altars in the centre." "These altars," we are further informed by Strabo, "were filled with ashes over which the sacred fire burned day and night." Dhala's "Theology."

other powerful light near the holy fire, inside the Fire-temple, would thus be, from every point of view, entirely out of place.*

Reflecting again on the message of our Lord, we are enjoined not only to contemplate the body of the fire or the mere outside of it, but *to contemplate the beams*, to see fire limb by limb, to dissect the skin and enter into the very soul of it. Now as fire has the known physical property of destroying all filth, so also it must needs have the psychic qualities of exterminating all vicious thoughts and elevating and spiritualising the Ego. Thus

* At Udwada, which is the Jerusalem of the Parsis, the walls of the centre hall have white '*Sparkling*' tiles and the ceiling is of bright scarlet which distract the devotee from his meditative prayers, and some of the Agiaries in Bombay keep blazing electric lights *just opposite* the holy fire.

Parashurama, the sixth Avatar of the God Vishnu "finding no Brahmans to release him by the accustomed ritual from the defilement of his earthly labours dragged on to shore the bodies of fourteen barbarians that he had found washed up from the ocean, burnt them on a funeral pyre, and then breathed life and Brahmanhood into their ashes. On these new-made Brahmans he had conferred the name Chitpavan Brahmans, which means purified by fire."* Is it then too much to say that the Soul who comes for his penance, whilst passing through the several different entrances of the fire-temple is almost half baptised before he reaches the fire? His world outside the temple was a veritable snare of sins, in the green of the gardens, in the

* Valentine Chirol's "Indian Unrest."

absence of noise, in the subdued light in the verandah and in the still silence of the hall, he has broken asunder the chains of his prison, and near the fire all his sins are for the time being kept in the back-ground, his wicked thoughts, if not quite weeded out, are temporarily driven away, and near this all-refining spiritual element he crouches on his knees with real fervour and devotion.

CHAPTER II.

THE INNER SANCTUARY OF FIRE.

Here at least the power of the Evil Spirit is of no avail. We find the two swords sheathed, indicating the final subjugation of the Power of Darkness. The swords constantly and quietly reflect the glory of the ever burning fire. Now and then strikes the solemn bell, solemnising the glory of Ahura and the fall of Ahriman. The priest in spotless white, an emblem of celestial purity,* rings the bell, and the musical intonation

* "White colour is the symbol of purity, innocence and faithfulness. The marriage ribbon knots among the ancient Romans were white. "

The Marriage Ceremony. Dr. J. J. Mody.

rises higher and higher up the dark dome; all earthly sounds the first ring of the bell, but the echo, all invisible and audible only to the soul, "catches every nerve and vibrates through the frame." A chord is struck in the heart more powerful than that evoked by the most gifted musician, and slowly and surely we are lifted up into the secrets of infinity. It is "the music nighest bordering upon heaven," says Lamb. Thus when sensation, sight and soul are all lost in solemn contemplation, we find a little heavenly light from the blue sky above crawling in from the top of the dome. It is the window of "escape and hope" into the infinite region, so noticeable in the paintings of all masters past and present.

CHAPTER III.

ASPECTS OF FIRE.

Before we relate how the holy fire gives us a clearer and nearer vision of His divine presence than do the symbols of all great religions, I will here enumerate the different aspects of the holy symbol and strive to show that not only the body of the flame but all its different aspects irresistibly lift us up into His holy presence.

The aspects of Fire are :—

1. The Perennial heavenward tendency of Fire.
2. The smoke curling upwards.
3. The sparks.
4. The light.

5. The coalescent tendency.
6. The infinite curves.
7. Every beam crowned with a crest of deep rosy-red hue.
8. The colour.
9. The burning & burnt-out wood.
10. The coating of cinder.
11. Its law and order.
12. Its delusiveness.
13. Its crackling.
14. Its purity.
15. Its change.
16. Its magnificent splitting into Crescents and Stars.
17. Its swiftness.
18. Its vibrations.
19. Its perpetual activity.

*20. Its everlasting youth.
21. Its dual character.
22. Its beauty.
23. Its moral and lessons.
24. Its inherent nature to destroy all dirt, dross and filth.
25. It is eternal.
†26. It is a Trinity.
27. It is a connecting link between the past and the present.
28. It is the Symbol of the Deity.

* Because of its curvilinear flow and growing upward tendency. Mark the newly budded leaves of the trees. Not only do they *point heaven-wards*, for they are innocent, but they are also absolutely immune from all dust particles. The comparison and the moral thus are obvious.

† Fire-Sun-God, also Man-Fire-God constitute the Trinity.

"Hence from God, the Primary, the Sun may be conceived as the Secondary, and the Fire (agni) as the Tertiary Principle."

"The Esoterique of Holy Fire." By Svamiji Govind Acharya. (*vide*) The Iranian Association Journal, October 1917.

Fire is ethereal, astral, mental and higher still. The spirit itself is often given that name. Yea the Logos is so dubbed. The fire that we behold is but the simulacrum of the sun-fire, and this again stands in a similar relation to the Logos.—"The light of the Avesta and the Gathas,"—by F. K. DADACHANJI.

Now the first thing that will attract the attention of the devotee in looking at fire is its perennial upward tendency. All elements inflexibly obey the law of gravitation and are attracted towards the earth, while fire alone is the element which scoffs at the law and points heavenwards.† From all earthly distractions the mind of the devotee is thus immediately diverted, and heaven alone becomes the object of his vision.

† A mere raising of the hand is defiance of the law of gravitation, so likewise is the upward flow of the flame.

† Here is an interesting Symbolic description of Fire, in Hindu Scriptures:—"*Dvi-sirshakam sapta-hastam tri-padam sapta-jihvakam varadam sakti-pancha bibhranam srik sruvan tatha abhitidam charma-dharam vame ch-ajya-dharam hare*"

[A. G. ACHARYA.]

(Translation)—He the mighty is of two heads, seven hands, three legs, seven tongues, the giver of boons, the preserver of the five faculties, a listener of prayers, the giver of courage, the destroyer of false religions and the *ultimate religion.*

The second thing that he will find inseparable from fire is the smoke, which with its slaty-blue colour—the colour of devotion to a noble ideal, pure religious feelings or infinity—ascends in wreaths to the sky. Thus only these two aspects of fire, the beams and the smoke, are enough to give the devotee his first spiritual baptism. Now that the whole body of fire is made his sole point of concentration, he finds its outer garment slowly beginning to disclose its inner vital element. He sees that the different beams of fire have a coalescent tendency and from all sides they seem to concentrate their energies in a brotherly clasp ; the small and the large flakes, the recently kindled or the full-fledged flames, appear to forget their differences of birth and rank and coalesce in one divine unity. Thus in fire our

Lord Zarathustra must have seen and felt the sacred union and striving of all heterogeneous elements towards one common goal and destiny, towards

"That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event;
To which the whole creation moves."*

Contemplating them more closely, these beams will be found projecting not in straight lines but in exquisite flowing curves of different gradations, into the "mortal and the immortal curves," which Ruskin in his "Modern Painters" has so well explained. "The one having an appointed term of existence, the other absolutely incomprehensible and endless, only to be seen

* Tennyson's "In Memoriam."

or grasped during a certain moment of their course. And it is found universally that the class to which the human mind is attached for its chief enjoyment are the endless or the immortal ones." Curved and flowing lines in all the noble works of Great Masters are always used to express either infinity, grace, beauty, youth, modesty or mystery, whereas straight lines everywhere depict the finite.*

Again look deeper into the very soul of the beams and you will find each beam crowned with a crest of deep rosy-red hue. Now the influence of colour

* Thus also "a loose flowing dress is, in all ages, considered to be necessary for solemn and state occasions. In courts, churches, universities, similar loose flowing dresses like gowns and robes, play an important part. The *folds* of such dresses carry the idea of mystery, modesty, respect and rank. So, women generally put on such loose flowing dresses."

"Marriage Ceremony," Dr. Mody.

on mankind is both irresistible and inevitable. Carlyle in his "Sartor Resartus" thus speaks of colour influence on the mind of mankind. "Again what meaning lies in colour! From the soberest drab to the high flaming scarlet spiritual idiosyncracies unfold themselves in choice of colours. If the cut betoken intellect and talent, so does the colour betoken temper and heart." Now the colour of the crest of the beams is deep rosy-red and love's colour according to Milton is "celestial rosy-red." Milton has not vainly painted love with a "rosy-red" hue. He must have felt and realised the ethereal feelings of young innocent lovers stamped on the cheeks with deep rosy-red hue, and thought of the heavenly union awaiting His blessings, and he must have also marked a poor hungry soul crying

to meet the indispensable demands of nature, receiving alms and blushing with a bright-red divine glow, in order to express his deep gratitude and love towards the Giver. The great poet must have thus felt scarlet and red to be the colour of gratitude and Love, gratitude and love towards the all-merciful Giver, and clothed Love with celestial "rosy-red hue." Love of course in a boundless and infinite sense is here meant. It comprises within its fold the love of family and friends, the love of community and country, the love of our enemy for which Christianity is so justly noted, the love of all mankind in fact, and love in the highest sense, which is God.

A little more concentration on fire and the worshipper finds the sparks

shooting out, brilliant in all their glorious but too ephemeral existence, passing into nothingness. But says Professor Teufelsdrockh in Sartor Resartus "We are light sparkles floating in the Aether of Deity." Here in this line an infinity unfolds itself. In the first place we *Are*; our life is not a dream but a positive fact. Then we are *Light* sparkles. We are in fact so light as to be without any worth or weight and are quite at the mercy of the forces from the unknown deep. Again we are *Sparkles*, not even sparks, almost an infinitesimal quantity, before His Divine Self. "*Floating* in the Aether of Deity;" Ours is not a solid foundation but we merely float on the wayward currents of the wind and the wave. Mark again the word *Aether*. Man is not meant to live like a hog, but he is

to "erect himself above himself," and weave his web in a more spiritual atmosphere—the Aether of Deity! The Aether of *Deity* is suggestive of the fact that man is nearer his God than any other earthly creature. Finally, if we are sparkles floating in the Aether of the Deity, then the Deity himself must needs be Fire. Sparks and sparkles shoot from fire alone and if we are sparkles, God is Fire.* This is the moral of sparks.

Having drunk so deeply from the fountain of fire, the devotee feels himself bathed in the light of fire; and

* "The mighty Lord Himself is indescribable. *He* is a fiery mass burning on for ever."

"Dante Papers," Dr. J. J. Mody.

God is Light.* He hears the crackling of the sandalwood and traces an unconscious harmony in the act of his fellow-worshippers cracking their finger-ends to ward off the evil spirit. His concentration now is intense and takes the place of contemplation. He has soared a step higher. He sees the glow of live cinders

*1. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.—John 1-5.

2. Hail, Holy Light! offspring of Heaven first-born,
Or of th' Eternal co-eternal beam,
May I express thee unblamed! Since God is Light,
And never but in unapproached light
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate."
Milton's Paradise Lost.

3. All light proceeds from Ormazd "This endless light is emblamatic of Ormazd, who dwells therein."—Arda Viraf, 101-4-12.

4. "Endless light" is another name of the highest heaven.
Dadistani Denik.

5. 'Ormasdes sprang out of the purest light; among all things perceived by the senses that element most resembles him; Areimanios sprang out of darkness and is therefore of the same nature with it."—Plutarch.

covered over with a thin coating of ashes. These cinders have done their duty, they are losing their light and heat. But the majesty they retain is the majesty of the "Fighting Téméraire" in Turner's famous picture where the whole heavens in one burning mass of fire and light signalise the passing away of a glorious era. The devout worshipper finds in the fire law and order—law in its exception to the law of gravitation and order in its coalescence—truth and beauty of the highest order. He falls on his knees in solemn supplication, feels his insignificance before the Maker of all things and with becoming propriety dips his finger in the ashes of the holy fire and presses it on his forehead—the seat of his Soul.* He sees with his

* The devotee like Zarathustra also meditates upon righteousness and purity at the moment of giving an offering of homage unto the fire of Ahura-Mazda.

inner eye the fire which his forefathers had brought from Persia, consuming his own sandal offerings as well as the oblations* of all future times, and finds his past, present and future indissolubly connected with spiritual chains of the holy fire and thus gets his faith the more deeply ingrained within him.

"Yes, we beseech for Thy Fire,
Through its holiness strong, O Ahura,
Most *swift* it is, and most mighty
To the believer shining for succour;
But for the hater, O Mazda,
It showeth with Javelins vengeance!"†

Again the great moral of fire is that it teaches humility. The purest of all

* "Every man throughout his whole life rested all his hopes on continually offering oblations of some kind to the gods, and the *burning of his body at death* was held to be the last offering of himself in fire. ' Essay on Jainism. "The Theosophist."

† Yasna XXXIV, Mills' Gathas.

elements, it has to pass through several ordeals before the disciple of Zarathustra pays obeissance and reverence to it. The sacred fire in the Atash Adarans and Atash Behrams is not the ordinary fire burning on our hearths. It has undergone several ceremonies. In the Fire-temple fires from various places are brought and kept in different vases. "Great efforts are also made to obtain fire caused by lightning. Over one of these fires a perforated metallic tray with a handle is held. On this tray are placed small chips and dust of fragrant sandalwood. These chips and dust are ignited by the heat of the fire below, care being taken that the perforated tray does not touch the fire. Then a new fire is created out of the first fire. Then from the new fire another is created by the same pro-

cess."* The process is repeated nine times and then at last the fire is considered pure. If then an element such as this which with its brightness, activity, purity and incorruptibility, bearing the most perfect resemblance to the nature and perfection of the Deity requires to be purged of its impurity nine times before it is considered absolutely pure, how much more should man, who is "shapen in iniquity and born in sin," require purging and purification, before he can lay claim to be even virtuous or pure ? This is the great lesson of humility driven home to us through our holy symbol.

Again Fire embodies in it the whole law and principle of change. There is nothing in the universe which is

*"Karaka's" History of the Parsis, Vol. II, P. 211-214.

constant. From the material to the spiritual, from youth to old age, from death to resurrection, we find ourselves pinioned on a whirling wheel of change. Fire constantly reminds the devotee of the great immutable Law of Change. From wood to smoke, fire, cinder and ashes it continuously undergoes a change *without changing its own nature.* Hence Fire is considered Eternal.

The devotee now gets a vision of a new spiritual world, and the deeps of infinity begin to be visible to him. In this whole burning mass of flame full of transcendent brightness and refulgent light, the worshipper notices the burning wood with its charcoal black colour. It is the great law of polarity, the dark indispensably mixed with the bright, the evil inevitably mixed with the good,

that he sees in Fire. In this moment of intense concentration and reflection, he finds the black wood steadily burning out giving place to the bright-red burnt-out wood, covered over with white ashes. It is the final displacement of the dark by the bright, the final conquest of the good over the evil. Thus we find in the scale of evolution, that the higher and higher man rises, the lesser and lesser become his imperfection and sins, till in some distant future, he approaches that happy millenium which Zarathustra himself has most emphatically prognosticated in Yasna XXXIV.

"Doctrines, Ahura and Actions,
Tell me which are the best ones, Mazda,
And the debtors prayer of the praisers,
Tell me this with the Law and Thy Good Mind.

And by Sovereign Power and grace
bring on
This world's Perfection."

Also in the "Patet Irani" Zarathustra prognosticates the coming of the Millenium in the clearest terms:—"I am without doubt in the existence of the good Mazdayasni Faith, in the coming of the resurrection and the later body, in the stepping over the Bridge Chinvat, in an invariable recompense of good deeds and their reward, and of bad deeds and their punishment, as well as in the continuance of paradise, *in the Annihilation of Hell and Ahriman and the Devs, that the God Ormazd will at last be Victorious and Ahriman will perish,* together with the Devs and the offshoots of darkness." This also makes clear what Zarathustra

meant, when after exhorting the multitude to "contemplate the beams of fire with a most pious mind" he said that "in the beginning there was a pair of twins....., these are the good and the base, in thought, word and deed. Choose one of those two spirits! Be good, not base!" Be it remembered that from the carnal appetite of the beast man is only just emerging. He has still the brute within him which needs to be steadily exorcised and exterminated. Countless years we may have yet to pass through, but the millenium is certain to come, the distant dream of Utopia is sure to be realised. Thus the Master must have seen in the flames Evil extinguished and Good eternally flourish. *Fire thus mutely proclaims the victory of Ahura and the fall of Ahriman.*

In Volume XI Stanza CCLXIV of the Dinkard we find "They considered this, too, thus : Namely Ahriman should be thus *cast out* from the world ; every one for the sake of self shall extract (him) from the body since Ahriman has his abode in human bodies. Consequently when he has lodgment in the bodies of men, *He will be exterminated from the whole world;* since so long as in the body of anyone whatever in the world a dwelling is made by a (Druj) Ahriman (will be) in the world." *

Henceforward to the devotee veils after veils are lifted up, and he finds *almost* all the beams of fire magnificently *Splitting* in the form of Crescents with their dual points fixed heaven-wards.

* Also Dk. Vol. 8, P. 436.

So *swift* is the flow of flame—and I think it is swifter than all the elements, for Zarathustra himself calls it "most swift," * (both in its physical and spiritual aspect) that it requires absolute concentration on the holy beams before the devotee can trace this magnificent splitting of the scarlet-crested beams in the crescent-curves of ethereal animation. Now the Crescent is universally considered a great symbol of faith and hope, and the ends of all beams are one magnificent row of Crescents, through which scintillating stars of high moral lessons shoot, swim, and disappear with a perfume of the everliving hope left behind them. His contemplation is now too deep for self-remembrance and in the heavenly calm and peace which follow, he finds himself enveloped in the

* Yasna XXXIV, Mills' Ga thas.

midst of the highest joy. The divine spark in him now glows with the utmost resplendence.

"*Athro Ahura Mazdao Puthre Tav Atrash Puthre Ahura Mazdao.*"* Here comes the most subtle philosophy of my religion. "Fire is the purifier, Fire is the son of God." Fire is not God Himself, for He is *Unknowable.* The physical fire which we see is a mere reflex of the Divine Fire which the finite can never conceive. We all live, move and have our being because of the primordial fire which is within us as well as everywhere. Primarily it was fire which brought forth heat, energy, motion, life, and without any one of them the whole universe would have been

* Atash Nyaesh.

non-existent.* Also when Christ said that he was the "son of God," he was in the right for the divine spark which was in him was from the original Fire of God. The real God is for ever unknowable.† The nearest approach to human comprehension is our symbol Fire which alone can give a faint idea of the Infinite to the Finite. Finally the soul of the devotee is so entirely wrapt in contemplation that he

* Professor Mills in 1915 wrote to me as follows:—
Fire is eternally united with the substance matter of the universe and it is for ever impossible to define or explain its source. It is the life-motion of all things. It is impossible to conceive of anything that moves without it. Its source of energy is eternal. Heat pervades the animal world and is the condition of all life. I am almost a fire-worshipper myself.—
10-9-15.

† I am quite sure all the prophets have seen Him face to face. Thus "Zarathustra learnt the Path through purity. The Path led Him to see with the utmost perspicacity the great Master. . . . No longer did he perceive as through a glass darkly. Mark, the words of the text place the most vehement stress upon seeing Goodness Gracious *clearly*.
'The Light of the Avesta and the Gathas.'

finds fire to be divested of all its physical aspects and sees in this Fire not the original Light, but a mere reflex of that Divine Something,* which we, with the limits imposed on our intelligence can never know, and which we call in the absence of any other name *Fire.*

The devotee immediately falls prostrate, becomes certain of his absolute insignificance before the Giver of all things and thanks the holy Spitma Zarathustra "Who gave us the divine knowledge and prays to the glory of the Most Knower of Good, the Most Wise, Professor of Rae

* Although he (Heraclitus) believed that fire was the primitive element of the phenomenal universe, still he postulated some power, force, or law which controlled the material element fire."

Heraclitus on his theory on Logos.

2. "God's Fire is the original of which but a pale shadow is seen by our eyes in mundane fires."

Light of the Avesta and The Gathas.

or brilliant lustre of spiritual knowledge, the Most Possessor of Glorious Light among all the souls that are passing from Infoldment to Unfoldment." *

"And (when) any person during one-third part of the interval (matigan) of night keeps fire burning in, all the evil influences (Shaeda) are thereby (azash) everywhere (Kola aigh) destroyed. (2) And as long as (hand zaman vad) the fire stands burning, everywhere that *fire opposes gloom and darknees, cuts them off entirely and renders them invisible and unknown.* (3) That action moreover brings help in the spiritual world for whomsoever (gumart) to break darkness and render gloom invisible. (4) And that light which causes darkness unseen and inapparent,

* Ervad Masani's "Zoroastrian Rituals."

rises upward (lalayegavînûnêt) in the spiritual world before the soul of the man for whom the light subsists, and renders the Man's Soul enlightened (rushan), happy and comfortable (asan)."*

Fire, again, as we know, has been held sacred since the beginning of history. "Our heroic fathers were not the only people in the ancient world to hold fire sacred; but from time immemorial many races of men have held it so. The Egyptians had a fire burning day and night in every one of their temples, and their Osiris Ani identified himself with it. "I am the great one, Son of the great one. I am Fire, the Son of Fire.....I am Osiris, the Lord of Eternity." "The Greeks and Romans likewise had a fire burning in

* Dinkard, Vol. XI, Chap. CCXXV.

all their towns and villages. The Mexicans and Peruvians had their "National Fires," burning upon large pyramids. The so-called "eternal lamps" that are seen in some Byzantine and Catholic Churches are further evidences of the hold which fire has always had over the heart and imagination of man. The most sacred spot in Rome was "Regia" on which stood the temple of Vesta, where the sacred Fire burned night and day. No Greek or Roman crossed the frontier without carrying an altar where the fire burned night and day*.....In fact in ancient Greece every hearth was an Altar, and its three social organisms—the nation, the gens,

* "The ancient Jewish ensign was a long pole, at the end of which was a kind of chafing dish, made of iron bars, which held a fire, and the light, shape, etc. of which, denoted the party to whom it belonged." Robinson's calmet. (From the Cross and the Crescent).

the family had fire for their common Symbol. The Vedas in a like manner taught that the hearth fire was co-substantial with the cause of generation."*

May this fire then eternally flourish !

"Agne raya supathâ râye asmân
vishvâni deva vayunâni vidvân
yuyodhy asmaj juhuranani eno
bhûyishthâm te nama-uktin vidhema."

(Agni—Fire) ! provide us with riches through good fortune, O thou god, who knowest all arts of obtaining wealth ! Remove from us all faults at which thou hast felt angry with us; let us prepare for thee a most excellent hymn for thy worship) †

* A. S. Wadia's "Message of Zoroaster."

† Rigveda, i, 189. I.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ESOTERIC TEACHING.

In Esoteric teachings and "Secret Doctrines" God is always identified with fire. We find 'fire,' 'flame,' 'day,' 'bright-fortnight,' to be the different names of various deities which preside over the cosmos psychic power. Shankaracharâya, the greatest of the Esoteric Masters of India, says that Fire means a deity which presides over Time (Kâla). Also the Lord is here spoken of as "a consuming *Fire* who shall be revealed with his mighty angels in flaming fire." Again the God Vishnu will return on Kalkî, the White Horse, "as the last Avatâra" amid fire and flames." Fire in this occult science is regarded as Aether in its purest form, whereas the

unity of matter and Aether is considered the "second, manifested deity in its universality." In this mystical faith we have two Fires, "the first, or the purely formless and invisible Fire, concealed in the Central Spiritual Sun; while the Fire of the Manifest Cosmos is Septenary throughout both the universe and our Solar System." Even Brahma is known as the "Fire-god and the Hindu Agni as the refulgent Deity from whose body issue a thousand streams of glory and tongues of flame and in whose honour certain Brahmins to this day maintain a perpetual fire."*

*"Secret Doctrines" by Madame Blavatsky.

CHAPTER V.

CAN FIRE BE PAINTED?

To paint the fire, so as to give a vivid representation of it in all its manifold aspects, I think, is well nigh impossible. But in order to appreciate all the difficulties of painting the fire, let us see how the painting of a growing leaf has defied the attempts of the best of the Masters. "For as in every group of leaves some are side ways, some foreshortened, some crossing each other, everyone differently turned and placed on the others, the forms of the leaves though in themselves similar, give rise to a thousand strange and differing forms in the group; and the shadows of one passing over the others, still further disguise and confuse the mass, until the

eye can distinguish nothing but a graceful and flexible disorder of innumerable forms, with here and there a perfect leaf on the extremity or a symmetrical association of one or two, just enough to mark the specific character and to give unity and grace, but never enough to repeat in one group what was done in another."* Hence Ruskin's sarcastic advice to presumptuous young painters:- "Paint the leaf as they grow! If you can paint one leaf you can paint the world." Add to such physical difficulties the spiritual mysteries of fire, and the task of painting it is sure to put even Titian or Turner to thoughtful trouble. Every aspect of fire is so closely connected and mixed up; there is such a variety in its perfect unity. Look at the beam and the smoke is lost, look at

* Ruskin's "Modern Painters."

the smoke and the spark is gone, look at the spark and the colour has vanished, look at the colour and its light has disappeared, look at the light and its life and spirit have fled, look at its life and spirit and its truth and moral are forgotten; meditate on its truth and moral and the whole will be "confusion worse confounded." Thus even the noblest Masters, who had an insight into most things and whose capacity knew no bounds, seem to have given up the attempt of painting fire in utter dispair. In all the five masterly volumes of Ruskin's "Modern Painters," we do not find one word or even a stray hint about fire, when so many conceivable objects under the Sun have been touched and treated exhaustively. Amongst the later painters "The Fire of London by Stanhope Forbes, R. A., is the best at-

tempt at painting fire. His fresco at the Royal Exchange deserves more than passing attention, for the painter here has strained every nerve to attain the unattainable. Fred Walker's "Vagrants," Blommer's "At the Fire Side," and other similar productions by known and unknown hands are only but an effort "to paint the soul."

Such are some of the aspects of our Holy Fire, the symbol which Zarathustra in his great wisdom conceived to be the highest and the holiest and the most worthy of adoption. And while we offer through its medium our homage to the Maker of all things, let us remember that we are invoking the Infinite by the help of a symbol, which is not only pure, purifying, and ennobling, but is the very essence of the Divine.

"Yea, I conceive Thee mighty,
Ahura Mazda,
When aids Thine hand hath nurtured
close appear,
Aids which as rewards Thou'lt give for
good or evil
Thy Fire's flame therewith, the strong
in Justice,
And when to me Thy Good Mind's
strength draws near."

Yasna XLIII,
Mills' Gathas.

CHAPTER VI.

The Philosophy of Fire.

One Sunday morning last summer my attention was drawn to the solemn congregation of a Roman Catholic Church, all bare-headed and expressly quiet, making their weekly offering of penitence, and seeking expiation of their sins. It was all sepulchral silence, both inside the hall of the orthodox church as well as within the domes of all repentant hearts. The living flickers of the burning tapers silently shedding their lustre into the hearts of the penitents, and cleansing the dross of their daily sins inwardly reminded them of their shadowy existence like the fickleness of the flame. It was a

solemn sombre scene, with the spell of God's own silence hanging on their hearts like the thin cloud of a dreary dream. Here the flame of the penitent's soul intertwined with the flame of the taper soared upwards to seek salvation in the bosom of God. Now this idea of the intertwining of the soul-fire and candle-flame is in consonance with the mysticism of the Vedas in which when the Brâhman performs his "Agnihotra"* he brings out the fire of his soul and unites it with the fire lighted before him and when his sacrifices and prayers are over he withdraws it again into himself, purer for this ordeal, from the external fire and deposits it back into his heart. Only it was now

* "Those Brahmans, who perform all the sacrifices required for going to heaven, according to the Vedic system, are called *Agnihotris*." Haug's "Essays on the Parsis."

that this profound double *silence* was mystically endowed with *speech*, and the repentant mutely sought an intercourse with his God. Thus the very paradox of negations was found to be here established, for this was neither speech nor silence, neither action nor rest, neither life nor death; as if the penitent found the very spirit of the Absolute in its essence present there, for the Absolute since the days of Manu has been revealed to flesh and blood by negations alone. Even in the ancient Upanishads we find that the Absolute "is never born, never dead. It comes out of nothing and goes into nothing..... it is smaller than an atom, greater than an universe," "it is neither speech nor silence." "It is not light, not dark, neither air nor ether. It has no relation, no taste, no smell, no eye, no ear,

no speech, no mind? O, no light, no life, no mouth, no form, no break, no without;—it enjoys nothing or is enjoyed by nothing!"* Thus the repentant felt the very impress of the spirit of the Absolute trenched in the hall. He was now in communion with the highest that he could seek on earth. The divine fire, of which his soul's spark was an infinitesimal part, was now as it were made visible to him. He was indeed in a meditative trance.

Ever silently burnt the taper, with its dark base of blue and grey, merging into the light of orange and gold and disappearing with a light grey apex into the bosom of the Supreme.† Mu-

* Brhadâranyakopanishad. Upanishad.

† The tip of the candle-flame and that of the "buti" of "ghee" is grey, whereas the tip of the fire, and specially the holy fire is deep rosy-red, the colour of celestial love, as already explained. Again no colour is positive and as it is influenced by environments, the colour often varies according to the nature of the back-ground.

tely did this bring to realisation the two important lessons of life. The first, that the human soul, which is but a spark of the divine flame, always soars upwards like the flame of the taper. Having its conception and birth in the darkness and sin of the earth, though always tinged with a little heavenly blue, as in the taper-flame, it gradually evolves, shapes itself, widens and has its being into the envelope of light, which is Ahura Mazda's special boon to mankind, and majestically aspiring heavenwards, spurning all earthly rules and laws of gravitation, both in their physical and spiritual senses, it disappears with celestial lustre into the heart and centre of its Creator. Also that the flame with a *thousand zigzag undulations* perennially rises upwards towards the central lustre

of the Supreme. Once and for all this philosophically destroys the pernicious doctrine of "the eternal recurrence of things" so ignorantly inculcated by Nietzsche in the perverted German minds. With ditches and pit-falls and "pernicious winds from the North," it keeps intact its inherent nature to rise upwards. Here is no receding, no retrogression. Both animate and inanimate nature together with their motor of humanity, always moves to "That God, which ever lives and loves, one God, one law, one element and far off divine event."

The second truth which it most impressively brings home to us is that sages, saints and prophets are not merely "commonsense ordinary thinkers" but that they are indubitably gifted with divine insight to dive into the very soul of nature and pluck out the very heart of its manifold mysteries.

Now reverting to the flame of the taper we find that the base of the flame is *dark*, which by degrees merges into glorious light, till the beautiful crest exhausts itself into the soul of the Ever-Effulgent. But opening the first chapter of the Genesis, written by Moses at least 5000 years ago, we find it stated that " In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void and *darkness* was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, *Let there be Light and there was light.*" Now Hector Macpherson in his " Romance of Modern Astronomy" says that " It is somewhat remarkable how close is the correspondence between the Biblical account and the latest scien-

tific theory as developed by Professor Lowell "The Earth was without form and void." "In scientific language the earth existed in the shape of an unshapely gaseous condensation in chaotic nebula." Then God said "Let there be light and there was light." Independently science says the same. The author after a close comparative scrutiny of predictions and scientific facts summarises that "the correspondence is complete between the accounts of modern science and the account of the ancient Biblical writer. So there need be no discrepancy between a belief in the Evolution of the Earth, as descri bed by modern science, and a belief in the accuracy and trustworthiness of Biblical record." Also so many of our latest discoveries in Astronomy and Geology we find embodied in the First Chapter

of the Genesis, whereas what took Dr. Wallace and Darwin decades of experiments and thought, we find written both in the Bible and in the Khorde Avesta, where "the work is apportioned into six sections; in both, the subsequent national calendar is grounded on this apportionment and in both vegetable life is represented as preceding animal life, while man occupies the the last place in the succession." * Likewise in the Vedas we find it declared that "in the beginning there was darkness and that in the end again all creation lapses into darkness but the darkness rests in the bosom of Supreme Effulgence." Thus the immortal prophets and seers having felt through their heavenly intuition that the cause

* The Avesta and the Bible by Rev. Hector McNeile.

of the entire creation was fire, determined by further *contemplating* this divine element that there was, as we have observed in the taper-flame, first the darkness and then the light and finally darkness again. This as we have seen is no longer in the region of polemics and prognostications but a well-established scientific fact.

Again as our Svamiji Govind Acharya of Mysore says this bright flame emerging from a dark base and ending in a dark tip " typifies the cycle of existence, with its two nodes of life and death. So Plato makes Socrates say that life proceeds from death and death from life. Else all things would come to an end."*

Thus while the whole congregation in the Church was solemnly repenting

* See "Esoteric of Fire" in Iranian Journal 1917.

of its sins and praying for forgiveness, these thoughts stimulated by the taper-flame kindled my dormant soul and brightened it once again into life and activity. But instead of the taper-flame in the orthodox-church, we have the flame of the "buti" fed from clarified butter (ghee) near our holy fire whilst performing all our religious rites and ceremonies, as also in the inner sanctuaries of our Agiaris and in the surrounding halls of our Atash-Behrams to exalt our minds and purify our Ego. Going a step further still our Hindoo-brethren sanctify this typical fire by feeding it through a specially prepared wick of their holy lotus-the symbol both of creation and generation. May this fire then eternally flourish and may we always strive to soar upwards as it soars! May the Lord's Light be our

guide and may this spiritual joy far transcend the earthly pleasures of the senses ! ! !

Santhosam Santhosam, Eppodum !

THE LOTUS.

"O mystic Lotus ! sacred and sublime,
In myriad-petalled grace inviolate,
Secure from transient storms of tragic fate;
Deep-rooted in the waters of all Time !
What legions loosed from many a far-off clime
Of wild-bee hordes with lips insatiate
And clamorous winds with wings of love or hate,
Have thronged and pressed round thy
miraculous prime,
To devastate thy loveliness, to drain
The midmost rapture of thy glorious heart—
But who could win thy secret, who could stain
Thy flawless beauty born of Brahma's breath,
Or pluck thy immortality, who art
Coeval with Lords of Life and Death ?"

SAROJINI NAIDU.

THE LOTUS.

Hinduism with all its mysticism and polytheism, its rites, ceremonies and sacrifices, its complicated code of manners and its strange customs, its worship of three hundred million gods, its ancient literature, philosophy and religion, in fact, its entire civilization since the days of its great law-giver Manu, is essentially embodied in the lotus. This holy flower revered and worshipped by nearly every civilized nation on earth is the kernel of all that is noblest and highest in the Hindu religion. So sublime and deep is its mysticism that it is well nigh impossible to grasp fully its true significance, especially as this sacred plant "represents both the

abstract and the concrete universes." But before I make an attempt to expound its mystic meaning I will enumerate some of the aspects of the lotus in the following order :—

THE ASPECTS OF LOTUS.

1. Its aquatic character.
2. Its green shield-shaped leaf.
3. Its spire-like petals pointing in all directions.
4. The beautiful order and arrangement of its stamens.
5. Its colour.
6. Its bud resembling flames of fire tapering upwards.
7. Its bloom resembling the radiance of the sun.
8. Its mystic influence, morals and lessons.

9. Its physical and astral existence.
10. It is a double feminine symbol.
11. It represents the abstract and concrete universes.
12. It is a symbol of generation.
13. It is a symbol of creation.
14. It is a universal symbol.
15. It was once a Christian symbol, now replaced by the water-lily, in Greek and Latin churches.
16. It is a symbol of prolific earth and represents Mount Meru.
17. It is a symbol of Brahmâ.

Now the first thing that attracts the attention of even a casual observer of the lotus is that it is an aquatic plant, that it must needs grow in water. Now water has the known property of cleansing all material dirt and filth as fire has the property of purifying, refining and

elevating both matter and spirit. As we have already seen in the Holy Fire, Parasurāma, the sixth Avatar of the god Vishnu, whilst reciting the "Mantras" over the dead bodies of the barbarians first sprinkled *the holy water* over them in order to exalt them into Brâhmanhood and then put them on a burning pyre before he breathed life and Brâhmanhood into their ashes. In the second place water which like fire has perpetual animation is only second in the grade of the visible refining elements, fire being unapproachably first. From the very beginning of civilization water has been regarded as the element out of which the universe was primarily evolved. In the Christian Scriptures we find the Spirit of God moved (or brooded) upon the face of the waters. Now the words 'water,' the 'vast deep,'

'the ocean' are used again and again to represent a homogeneous primordial substance out of which we are told the universe was *evolved* by the energy of the divine thought. A similar symbol occurs in the Hindu Scriptures. "A vast expanse of water, perfectly still, perfectly void. Beneath it, lies unseen Vishnu in the form of Narayana, sleeping on the serpent of eternity. He awakes and becomes conscious of a desire for renewed activity and manifestation. So he sends forth from himself, (for he contains within himself the potentiality of all forms), a *lotus flower*, the symbol of *manifested life*. The beauty and *radiance of the flower was like unto that of the sun* and a thrill passed through that "huge deep" as it appeared on the surface of the waters, so that ripples spread outwards in all directions.

Then in the centre of the flower appeared Brahama, the God of creation. The ripples grew into waves, until the whole ocean began to rise and fall with the mighty vibrations of Narayana's thought. And as Brahama sat in the lotus flower in the midst of these surging waves, he remained still and silent meditating*1 for a space of a hundred years and then sending forth the *energy of his thought*, he brought into being*2 "the three worlds and all that is contained therein.*3" Again in the Prologue of Sakuntala a Brahman

*1 Meditation is action not inaction. Buddha's meditation gave birth to a higher Aryan Civilization as Zarathustra's did to the Persian, and Mahomet's to the Arabian.

*2 Creation is the work of the divine thought. They were the thought vibrations of the Creator which created the cosmos.

*3 "Elements of Theosophy" by Lilian Edger.

pronounces his benediction thus :— "Water was the first work of the Creator, and fire receives the oblations ordained by law ; the sacrifice is performed with solemnity ; the Two Lights of Heaven distinguish time ; the subtle ether, which is the vehicle of sound pervades the universe ; the Earth is the natural parent of all increase and by Air all things breathing are animated. May Isa, the God of Nature, apparent in these eight forms, bless and sustain you.* Now this Eastern conception of water we find so deeply implanted in the minds and habits of Orientals that whereas "the Spirit of the garden-paradises of Europe hides in the flowers, the grass, the trees, the soul of an Eastern garden lies in none of these ; *it is centred in the running water* which

* Sakuntala by Kalidasa.

alone makes its other beauties possible."* But it is not only the East that we find worshipping this sacred element. Ruskin, the greatest English student of physical nature, says "that of all inorganic substances, acting in their own proper nature and without assistance or combination, water is the most wonderful. If we think of it as a source of all the changefulness and beauty which we have seen in the clouds; then, as the instrument by which the earth we have contemplated was modelled into symmetry and its crags chiselled into grace; then, as in the form of snow, it robes the mountains it has made, with that transcendent light which we could not

* "Gardens of the Great Moguls" by Mrs. Villiers Stewart.

have conceived if we had not seen; then, as it exists in the form of a torrent, in the iris which spans it, in the morning mist which rises from it, in the deep crystalline pools which mirror its hanging shores, in the broad lake and glancing river; finally in that which is to all human minds the emblem of unwearied, unconquerable power, the wild, various, fantastic, tameless unity of the sea; what shall we compare to this mighty, this universal element, for glory and for beauty? or how shall we follow its eternal changelessness of feeling? It's like trying to paint the soul."* So water if properly contemplated lets the observer, whether imbued with the Eastern or the Western conception into the wonders and mysteries of the Infinite.

* Ruskin's "Modern Painters."

The second thing that we observe in the lotus is its broad, green leaf which is of the shape of a *protecting* shield. Its root is embedded in the mud, the stalk stands erect and passes through the water, while the flower breathes ambrosial air and sunshine. All this is enough food for deep thought and reflection; that though we may be born in the mud, with controlled instincts, fixity of purpose and righteous aims we may purge our baser selves of dirt and dross and like the lotus-flower stand erect face to face with our God.

"Higher than Indra's ye may lift
your lot,
And sink it lower than the worm
or gnat.".....
Ah! Brothers, Sisters! Seek
Nought from the helpless gods by
gift and hymn,

Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with
fruits and cakes.
"Within yourself deliverance must
be sought
Each man his prison makes."*

Then the observer notes that the colour of the leaf is ever-green. It is a colour of luxuriance, growth, life and joy as opposed to the parched brown of death and decay. Wordsworth in "The Excursion" describes green as opposed to melancholy and says :—

"Oh! What a sweet recess, thought
I, is here,
—So lonesome and so perfectly
secure ;
Not melancholy—, no, for it is
green."

* "The Light of Asia" by Edwin Arnold.

Now psychically "the colour green when it is 'grey-green' connotes deceit; when it is brownish-green, flecked with points and flashes of scarlet, it stands for jealousy, when it is ordinary green it means adaptability. In its lowest sense it signifies deceit, whereas in its highest aspect it expresses "*divine power of sympathy.*"* But as the leaf of the lotus which is the very life and soul of the plant is an emblem of the growing and protecting power, for it feeds, nourishes and protects the plant from decay and death, its colour necessarily symbolises in its highest sense the "divine power of sympathy," for without the leaf the plant would cease to exist.

* "Thought Forms" by Annie Besant.

But the real beauty of the lotus-flower lies in its elongated petals, which stand out like the spire of a church or the flame of a taper, pointing not only towards heaven but marking all directions. This is in accordance with the Hindu conception of the divinity for to the Hindu mind, God is not in the heavens alone, but He pervades the entire space, is in the most distant star of the 'seventh universe' as well as is in the grass and dust that man treads on. Brahma to him is not a personal god residing in the high heavens as in the Bible; but as in the Avesta* He is universal, omnipresent and all-pervading, nay wholly present in his own heart. This is why a Hindu in his daily contemplation turns his thoughts inwards to find a glimpse of

*Ahuramazd Yasht.

the Divine, whereas a Mahomedan or a Christian seeks his god in external nature :—

Behold, I show you Truth ! Lower
than hell,
Higher than Heaven, outside the
utmost stars,
Farther than Brahm doth dwell,
Before beginning, and without an end,
As space eternal and as surety sure,
Is fixed a Power divine which
moves to good.....etc.*

Now this pantheistic conception of God is not the sole heritage of the Hindus, for Seneca whose father was a Roman knight and whose mother a lady of Spanish birth had preached pantheism when St. Peter and St. John were mere fisher-lads by the shores of

* The Light of Asia.

Gennesareth. "No doubt he speaks of God's love and goodness, but with him God is no personal living Father, *but the soul of the universe*—the fiery, primæval, eternal principle which transfers an inert, and no less eternal, matter, and of which our souls are, as it were, but divine particles or passing *sparks*.* "God," he says, "is Nature, is Fate, is Fortune, is the Universe, is the all-pervading Mind. He can not change the substance of the universe. He is Himself under the power of Destiny, which is uncontrollable and immutable. It is not God who rolls the thunder, it is Fate. He does not rejoice in His works, but is identical with them."†

* See P. 80.

† Seekers after God by The Ven. F. W. Farrar; Archdeacon of Westminster.

* All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body nature is, and God the soul."

Mark again the colour of the lotus-flower. It is white or rosy, sometimes blue. Now the first is an emblem of purity and spirituality, "crimson and rose are a mark of 'affection,' pure pale rose indicates 'absolute unselfish love,' whereas rose mixed with a touch of blue shows "universal brotherhood of humanity," whilst the colour blue either denotes a 'noble ideal' or 'pure religious feelings.' †

* Pope.

† "Thought Forms" by Annie Beasant and Leadbeater.

Also see how Dante in his Purgatorio alludes to the mystical symbolism of colours.

"The lowest stair was marble
white, so smooth
And polished,.....
The next of hue more dark
Than sablest grain,.....
The third, that lay
Massy above, seemed prophyry,
that flamed
Red as the life-blood spouting
from a vein."*

Further the student of the lotus discovers that the stamens of the

* NOTE.—"By the white step is meant the distinctness with which the conscience of the penitent reflects his offences; by the burnt and cracked one, his contrition on their account; and by that of prophyry, the fervour with which he resolves on the future pursuit of piety and virtue."

flower are so beautifully and uniformly arranged as to form a regular regal throne, quite worthy of a god. No wonder then that Ravi Varma the Indian Titian, in his "Laxmi" makes this goddess stand in the central hollow of this holy flower, with a lotus in each of her hands, the four lower petals of which mark all the four directions of the universe as well as connote the four elements of the earth. Again in the Christian religion, in every picture of Annunciation, Gabriel the Arch-angel, appears to the Virgin Mary, holding in his hands a spray of water-lilies. "This spray typifying Fire and Water, the "*male and female aspects of creation*, or the idea of creation and generation," symbolises precisely the same idea as the Lotus in the hand of the Bodhisattva who announces to

Mahâ-Mâyâ, Gautama's mother, the birth of Buddha, the World's Saviour. Thus also were Osiris and Horus constantly represented by the Egyptians in association with the Lotus-flower, both being sun-gods or gods of Fire."*

It is also to be observed that certain parts of the leaf and stalk of this sacred flower as we have already seen are used in the holy-shrines of the Hindus, to feed the fire, fire being considered even by them so holy as to be either degraded or polluted by wicks from any other source. No wonder then that this plant even to this day is sacred to Egyptians, the Chinese and the Hindus alike and its flowers are figured on Egyptian and Indian monuments.

* "Secret Doctrines" by Madame Blavatsky.

Coming to the eighth aspect of this universal and ancient symbol we find stated in the esoteric science and secret doctrines, that the lotus-plant exists quite perfectly and in all its details not only as a miniature embryo in its seed, which is a purely physical characteristic "but its prototype is also supposed to be present in an ideal form in the Astral Light from "Dawn to Night" during the "Manvantaric period." Now this signifies that the physical lotus-flower is but the temporary reflection or the mere shadow of the "eternal ideal prototype in Divine Thought."

As regards the tenth aspect namely that it is a double feminine symbol we find that both India and Egypt had and have their sacred lotuses, symbolic of

the same "Holy of Holies"—the lotus growing in the water *as a double feminine symbol* which is "both the bearer of its own seed and root of all." More than half of Hindu mythology we find reproduced on canvas in resplendent hues with lotuses as emblematic of these multitudinous aspects. Here on the canvas the lotus in its right natural growth is either a throne for a god or with its inverted leaves, as in the 'Ram Panchayten' or Mahalaxmi, a regal chair for a king or an anointed seat for a saint. In the gardens and in the waters, in the 'durbars' of the kings and in the celestial halls of the Rishis and the saints, with crocodiles and elephants* as symbolic of the water and the earth or the magnitude of their property and wealth,

* An elephant in India also symbolises a sentinel.

the presence of this sacred flower is distinctly marked. No Brâhman performs his various rites, no "Bhatji" lays the foundation stone of a house or a palace or hymns his house-warming rituals without the sacred Agni and lotuses before him, and 'pandits' lecturing on religious lores often keep these flowers near their inspiring presence. There is no Hindu philosophy which does not explain its symbolic greatness and there is yet to be born a true Aryan bard who will hesitate to sing its praises. Kalidasa, the Shakespeare of India, whilst depicting Sakuntala's divine love, makes this heroine send her love-message on a lotus-leaf thus doubly sanctifying the holy spirit of the letter. In that famous picture of Ravi Varma "Sésha Sāijin" we find Brahmâ *representing the universe* seated on a lotus-flower which is growing

out of Vishnu's navel, "the Central Point in the Waters of infinite space." This reproduction of the highest Hindu philosophy on canvas, which I will explain a little later on, is one of Ravi Varma's master-pieces.

Again this flower, which is supposed to be sacred both to nature and her gods, represents the *Abstract and the Concrete universes*, the lotus standing as an emblem of the *productive powers of both physical and spiritual nature*. It exercises its most mystic influence on the universal mind because its seeds, even before they germinate, contain perfectly formed leaves—the miniature shape of what they one day will become as perfected plants. Thus to the Hindu mind it is *an emblem of the productive power of nature* "through the agency

of Fire and Water or Spirit and Matter." The root of the lotus embedded in the mud and drawing its life and inspiration from mother earth and the stem growing through the water, *represent the concrete universe*, whereas the flower which in all its purity faces the sun and His Divine Presence *symbolises the Abstract universe*.

Coming now to Ravi Varma's masterpiece "Sésha Sâijin" when we find Brahmâ—the Creator—seated and enthroned above the lotus we know that the whole symbol is made to represent *Creation*. Throughout the Hindu scriptures we find that the Spirit of Fire or Heat fructifies and turns into concrete form everything which is born of water or primordial earth. The celebrated Greek philosopher Thales has also con-

sidered mist to be the primordial element through which the world has primarily been evolved. In Polier's "Mythologic des Indous" we find "that in the primordial state of the creation, the rudimental Universe, submerged in the Water, reposed in the bosom of Vishnu. Sprung from this chaos and darkness, Brahmâ, the Architect of the World, poised on a lotus leaf, floated, (moved) upon the waters unable to discern anything but water and darkness. Perceiving such a dismal state of things, Brahmâ soliloquises in Consternation: "Who am I? Whence came?" Then he hears a voice: "Direct your thoughts to Bhagawat."* Brahmâ rising from his natatory position seats himself upon the lotus, in an attitude of contemplation, and reflects

* Mark the diference between Brahmâ and Bhagawat.—J. D. S.

upon the Eternal, who, pleased with his evidence of piety, disperses the *primeval darkness* and opens his understanding. After this Brahmâ issues from the universal egg (Infinite chaos) as light,* for his understanding is now opened and he sets himself to work. He moves on the eternal Waters with the Spirit of God within himself; and in his capacity of the Mover of the Waters he is Vishnu or Narayana." Now, as we have seen, the Hindu philosophy considering water as the fundamental factor and recognizing the indispensability of heat for all creation, growth and generation symbolises creation by the lotus, which, drawing its vitals from the mud, gets itself purified and refined in the water and after being spiritualized in the ambrosial

*Mark again, Light comes from darkness. The first is darkness; also "God is Light, the Light of Lights.' (Jyotisham Jyotish.)

air, faces now in its purest aspect the Sun, in which dwells the exuberant glory of Bharata. Similarly, we find it written in an ancient Kabalistic MSS. that "pointing to like significance was the lotus growing in the waters of the Nile. Its mode of growth peculiarly fitted it as a symbol of the generative activities. The flower of the lotus, which is the bearer of the seed for reproduction, as the result of its maturing, is connected by its placenta-like attachment to mother-earth or the womb of Isis, through the water of the womb, that is the river Nile, by the long cord-like stalk, the umbicus. Nothing can be plainer than the symbol, and to make it perfect in its intended signification of *generation, a child is sometimes represented as seated in or issuing from the flower.*"

Again, in the Hindu Mythology the lotus-flower is represented as growing out of Vishnu's navel, the god who rests on the waters of space, on the Serpent of Infinity. This symbolises in a most graphic form the whole universe as evolving from the "Central Sun, the Point, the ever concealed germ." Laxmî who is the female aspect of Vishnu is likewise shown floating on a lotus-flower at the "Creation" and during the churning of the Ocean of Space, as also springing from the "Sea of Milk" like Venus-Aphrodite from the foam of the ocean. This holy symbol either as the Lotus in the East or as the Water-lily in the West philosophically signifies the "Emanation of the Objective from the Subjective, or the Divine ideation passing from the abstract to the visible form." Burnouf the great Orientalist entering deeply

into its spirit, while explaining it in detail says that "in esoteric philosophy Brahmâ does *not* create the earth any more than the rest of the universe." Having evolved himself from the soul of the world, once separated from the First Cause, he evaporates with and emanates all nature out of himself. He does not stand above it but is mixed with it. Brahmâ and the universe form one Being, each particle of which is in its essence Brahmâ himself, who proceeded out of himself. The same mystic explanation about the First Cause, the Cosmos and the Creator we find magnificently embodied in the Rig Veda where the great Rishi says :—

"Who knows the secret? Who
proclaimed it here,
Whence whence this manifold
creation sprang?—

The gods themselves came later
into being—
Who knows from whence this great
creation sprang ?
He from whom all this great
creation came,
Whether His will created or was
mute,
The most High-Seer that is in
highest heaven,
He knows,—*or perchance e'en He*
knows not."*

Hence it is truly said that ever since the dawn of civilization "the bewildered Wanderer has stood shouting question after question into the Sybil-cave of destiny receiving no answer but an Echo !" This mysterious riddle conclu-

* Max Muller's translation of the Ancient Sanskrit Literature.

sively proves man's utter inability to penetrate the thickest veil of the Word, the Logos and the Absolute or even to comprehend the might of Brahmâ—the Architect. Here the subtlest reasonings of Kant, Carlyle or Goethe seem to fall short of the metaphysical and philosophical problems so boldly tackled. The East has here triumphantly scored over the West and eclipsed its glory. The moment we keep faith in the belief that Brahmâ does not create the universe, that He does not stand above it but is mixed with it, that He and the universe form one Being, then alone we get a glimpse of that scintillating ray which makes the profound mysteries of Hinduism dimly intelligible. Thus do we find Hinduism (*i. e.* Vedism) with all its mysticism, philosophy and religion, on which is based the entire structure of

54574

its society, crystallised in the kernel of the lotus dimly visible and explicable only to the few. Like that primrose on the river bank it is but a primrose and no more to the multitude, but to the thinker, the student and the sage, every stamen and petal has a mystery as deep as the depths of the unfathomable Void.

THE CRESCENT.

May sage and simple, catching with one eye
The moral intimations of the sky,
Learn from thy course, where'er their own
be taken,
"To look on tempests, and be never shaken;"
To keep with faithful step the appointed way
Eclipsing or eclipsed, by night or day,
And from example of thy monthly range
Gently to brook decline and fatal change;
Meek, patient, steadfast and with loftier scope
Than thy revival yields, for gladsome *hope*.

WORDSWORTH.

THE CRESCENT.

Faith and hope are the very essence of Mahomedanism. 'Allah Akbar' 'God is great,' and we must submit to Him. "That our whole strength lies in resigned submission to Him, whatsoever He do to us. For this world and for the other! The thing He sends to us, were it death and worse than death, shall be good, shall be best; we resign ourselves to God." Well, says Goethe, if this be Islam then we are soul and spirit Islams. "Yes, all of us that have any moral life; we all live so. It has ever been held the highest wisdom for a man not merely to submit to necessity,—necessity will make him submit,—but to know and believe well

the stern thing which necessity has ordered was the wisest, the best, the thing wanted there. To cease his frantic pretension of scanning this great God's World in his small fraction of a brain, to know that it had verily though deep beyond his soundings, a Just Law, that the soul of it was good;—that his part in it was to conform to the Law of the Whole, and in devout silence follow that; not questioning it, obeying it as unquestionable."* This teaching of absolute faith and hope of Islam we find so deep-rooted in the souls of this great prophet's followers that "death and even worse than death" fail to inspire them with fear. To a Mahomedan everything is irrevocably fixed in

* "Hero-Worship"—Carlyle.

the relentless cycle of "Kismat," but everything for him passed from better to best. The very symbol through which he deciphers the mysteries of the infinite and catches a glimpse of his Allah is first and foremost a symbol of hope. When almost the whole moon is shrouded in darkness, a little thin round edge of it commonly called the crescent shines supremely confident of better days to come. With its dual points fixed heavenwards it inspires all Islam and the world to be hopeful for darkness and night must vanish giving place to brighter days of hope and joy. "Only keep faith in Me, brushing aside all thy worries and cares." Such also is the teaching of the Prophet who had a Crescent-like vein, "like the 'horse-shoe-vein' in Scott's 'Redgauntlet,'

prominent on his brow."*† This noble prophet's entire outlook on life was one of hope of which the vein on his brow was as it were the symbol. "He spoke of his doctrine to this man and that; but the most treated it with ridicule, with indifference." His profound meditation in solitude and silence during the Ramadhan month in a cavern on Mount Hara near Mecca found but only thirteen followers in the next three years, of whom his wife Kadijah was the first. But Mahomet was not at all dejected, he kept on hoping against hope. At last like all the great leaders of men after many wanderings, failures

* Hero-worship.

† The *Agna-Chakra* of the Yoge-Sastra of the Hindus is situate between the brows; and is moon-shaped. (A. Govindachârya). But see Introduction on Crescent.

and persecutions we find him succeeding in making the fanatic Arabs of his days believe in his great message of Faith, Hope and Divine Justice. "And let not the unbelievers think, because we grant them lives long and prosperous, that it is better for their souls. We grant them long and prosperous lives only that *their iniquity may be increased; and they shall suffer an ignominous punishment.*" "Believe therefore in God, ye shall receive a good reward."* Thus uninfluenced by the seeming injustice of the divine order of things Mahomet exhorts his followers to see well behind the veil. Quite hollow is the reception and insincere the welcome to a sinner though he may be however prosperous. With him everything is but the

* Al Koran, Chap. III, entitled The Family of Imam; revealed at Medina.

shadow and the show, the soul always tantalisingly fleeting before him. Behind him is all ridicule and mockery, for the real joy, the true sympathy, the frank and sincere opening of arms which are only the reward of the chosen few of Allah, are only in store for the virtuous and the true. All emptiness, simulacrum and show are the sinner's heritage on earth, whereas on that day of resurrection when the dry bones shall once again begin to stir and be invested with life, and the dead shall live again, the evil-doer shall be punished with eternal pangs and the good will have his reward. Verily this is the true meaning of Islam resting as It does on faith and hope.

But the Crescent is not the symbol of the Mahomedans alone. Like the great symbols of all known religions it was held sacred and venerated by seve-

ral nations from the remotest antiquity. East and West were united in common worship of the symbols of the four great religions, for the Fire, the Lotus, the Crescent and the Cross were adored and worshipped by the Egyptians, the Hindus, the Chinese, the Greeks and the Romans alike.* But in the beginning the Crescent was not identified with Islam. "It is a remarkable circumstance in the investigation into the origin of the Cross as an ensign of war to find it in close connection with, and actually springing out from, the mysterious heathen symbol of the Crescent, and the celebrated Roman Labarum."† Now the Labarum consisted of a long spear, with a transversal piece of wood,

* The "Darsapûrnimaishtâ" (new and full moon sacrifice) seems to correspond with the 'Darûn' ceremony of the Parsis—Haug "Essay on the Parsis."

† The Cross and the Crescent by Macintyre.

forming with the spear the figure of a cross, and a lunette or crescent made of metal fastened near the top of the spear, and above the transverse beam. Thus we find the Cross and the Crescent having the same origin and the former actually springing from the latter. Also this Crescent which we all see fixed in the heavens was not in the beginning the symbol which so touched the imagination and exacted adoration and worship. "The crescent or figure similar to the new moon, which was almost universally used by ancient people in rites and ceremonies of a sacred and religious nature,* was not

* In the seventh century in Ireland the form of the tonsure, which was the ceremony of cutting off a part of the hair of the head with prayers and benedictions by the Bishop in the first degree of the clerical was made *Crescent-wise* across the head.

Dante Papers,
Dr. J. J. Mody.

meant originally to represent the moon, although, doubtless, people took it for such, the same as every person now-a-days supposes it to represent that luminary; but it was a symbolical or hieroglyphical representation *of the sacred vessel*, which was carried in religious procession among the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans and every people who received knowledge from the first mentioned nation."* Now this sacred vessel which was called the Ship of Isis or Osiris is to be found in the paintings as well as on the sacred sculptures of Egypt. This Argo or sacred vessel, says Bryant, is *the representation of the historical Noah's Ark* which saved the last family of the antedeluvian world. Besides the representation of the Noah's Ark in all their religious rites,

* The Cross and Crescent by Macintyre.

the ancients also had their sacred cups in the form of crescent-like boats which were used in their "Mysteries." Thus from the shape of Noah's Ark, which saved the entire animal kingdom from sure destruction as recorded in almost all religions and histories and established as a scientific fact from geological observations, they found the Crescent in the heavens whose shape exactly resembled the shape of the Ark held to be the symbol of physical salvation from times immemorial. Thus the Crescent of Islam came to be regarded as a symbol of *physical salvation*. This sacred ark got its double sanctity and belief from the recognition of that waxing and waning 'miracle' in the heavens as a popular female deity known as the queen of heavens. Saint Paul called this heavenly queen Diana

when he was overpowered at Epehus by the idol manufacturers and silver shrine makers of that wealthy city. From that day to this the figure of Diana has always been represented with the crescent either on the fore-part of her head, or at her feet. Even the Assyrian queen of heaven called Hera, has in her right hand a staff on the top of which is fixed the figure of the crescent.* Also in the Mexican hieroglyphical symbols we find most prominently a boat in the shape of a crescent. In that celebrated Mexican picture of the Virgin of Guadaloupe, revealed to an Indian peasant, we find the holy Madonna in a garment of crimson and gold with a blue cloak covered with stars, her hands clasped

* Layard's Nineveh, Vol. II, P. 456.

and her foot *on a crescent* supported by a cherub. The famous Murillo in his celebrated picture of the Assumption of the Virgin represents the divine woman as standing on a crescent.* Also in the "Immaculata" we find Virgin Mary standing on the top of the globe, her right foot crushing man's hereditary foe—the serpent. This killing of the serpent, who also symbolises eternity, represents here the doing away for once God's eternal law of natural birth. It is the vindication of an exceptional event of the immaculate conception. The globe on which she stands receives the light of her aura intertwined with the light of the heaven,

* "The most wonderful" picture of the Crescent and the Moon "in existence" is described by Hue as hanging in a certain Lamasery in Thibet.

(*Vide*) Isis Unveiled.

whereas just in the forefront of the picture we find a *crescent* in its full radiance presaging an era of light and hope to all mankind, for the immortal Saviour is to come and redeem mankind.

This holy symbol had not only mesmerised the followers of Mahomet and exacted reverence from them but it had a magnetic attraction for so many heroes known to history. It had and has an irresistible charm for both the vulgar and the wise. Our mythical man in the moon we represent in the crescent and not in the full-moon. We find Indian gods and goddesses as in the "Rohini-Chandra," Chandra Śiva and Chandra* descending from the celestial

* All the pictures of Hindu mythology treated in this book can be had for a penny each from Ravi Varma's Press, Kalbadevi Road, Bombay.

clouds to breathe divine love into human hearts seated on a Crescent. Even Italy's immortal soul Dante cannot shake himself free from the all-absorbing charms of this heavenly goddess, for he allows himself in his mood of utter dejection to be led by Lucia to the gates of Purgatorio to find his heart throbbing with hope whilst feeling her heavenly fascination. The very sight of Purgatorio at least for a moment loses its horror and in spite of the chilling atmosphere we find Dante so cheered up that he pours forth his effusion for her in these immortal words :—

"Now the fair concert of Tithonus old,
Arisen from her mate's beloved arms,
Looked palely over the eastern cliff."

Mark it was neither the full-moon nor

the half one but the Crescent. In the holy Gathas we find Zarthustra wondering at this natural supernatural phenomenon of the waxing and the waning 'miracle'; "Who thins the waning moon and waxing filleth?"* Kalidasa, the Shakespeare of India, in his famous Sakuntala makes his hero Dushyanta, give his first present near the holy lotus to his fiancée Sakuntala in the following words:—"Look, my darling; this is the *new moon* which left the firmament in honour of superior beauty, and, having descended on your enchanting wrist, has joined both its horns round it in the shape of a bracelet." The only miracle *eternally standing* to the credit of Mahomet is the "*miracle of the Crescent*." "The hour of Judgment approacheth; and the moon hath been split in sunder;

* "The Hymns of Zoroaster." W. H. Mills.

but if the unbelievers see a sign, they turn aside, saying that this is a powerful charm."* Sale, the famous translator commenting on this says: "Some imagine the words referred to a famous miracle supposed to have been performed by Mahomet; for it is said that, on the infidels demanding a sign of him, the moon appeared cloven in two, one part vanishing and the other remaining; and Ebn Masud affirmed that he saw Mount Hara interpose between the two." As in religious history and poetry so likewise in paintings we find that immortal painter Turner equally full of enthusiasm for this charming orb. In his "Fighting Téméraire," by which Turner indeed achieved immortality, we find the setting of the Sun depicting

* Al Koran, Chap. LIV.

the passing away of the old era of the sailing vessels and the *crescent* indicating the dawn of a new era of *hope* in steam-power, as symbolised by the little steam-boat. Again in his "Æneas relating his adventures to Dido", Turner cannot free himself from the charm of this waxing and waning heavenly luminary. Here the whole canvas glows with bright and lurid hues. The hero recites his adventures in the city—which afterwards became ancient Rome—to the heroine. The entire aspect is imaginative and ethereal. Nothing is here clear and precise, not one human figure in the foreground, not one oar, not one boat, even the distant landscape on the right is enveloped in a mist of thought, but the *Crescent* in the centre of the sky shines bright and distinct. Only the crescent and a dog

in the foreground are completely clear. The dog is painted black whereas the whole canvas glows with masses of yellow, red, blue and green. The dog is intentionally painted black so as to draw the attention by contrast to the white crescent. It is the law of polarity, the indispensable vice in face of the whole virtue. Turner here like the Venetians has also introduced the dog in order to give the fullest contrast to "*the highest tones of human thought and feeling.*" Thus the crescent here represents both the highest tone of human thought and feeling and the new era of hope in the foundation of ancient Rome. To take one more instance, in Daniel Maclise's well-known picture "Meeting after the Battle of Waterloo," amidst all wreck and ruin and desolation we find Wellington and Blucher

with an unutterably sad expression on their faces meeting and shaking hands. Soldiers, officers, animals, birds, guns, bricks and all are lying in one stenching heap. The curse of war has never been painted in truer colours. But the eternal law that peace and order arise from carnage and chaos alone is aptly vindicated here. In this heart-rending confusion of blood and iron, we find a Crescent on the left-hand top of the picture shedding its mild lustre on this destruction as presaging an era of hope, prosperity and peace, which Europe enjoyed for full one century.

But the reason why the crescent rather than the half or the full moon has such a powerful hold on the minds and hearts of men is, I firmly believe, the mystery and grace of

its magnificent curve. Humanity has intuitively rejected the splendour of the full moon with all its light, brightness and refulgence as a visible symbol to see the invisible and has preferred the crescent because of the joyful mysteries and grace of its delicate curvature. "All curves" says Ruskin "are more beautiful than right lines. All curves however are not equally beautiful and their indifference of beauty depend on the different proportions borne to each other by those infinitely small right lines of which they may be conceived as composed. When these lines are equal and contain equal angles, there can be no connection nor unity of sequence in them. The resulting curve, *the circle, is therefore the least beautiful of all curves.*"* Conversely, the

* Ruskin's Modern Painters, Chapter VI, Vol. II.

curve of the crescent is, I believe, the most beautiful and attractive of all the other remaining curves of our heavenly lamp of the night.* This psychological explanation of the curves is both significant and illuminative and enables one to understand the real beauty of the crescent. But the crescent is not a mere imaginary symbol of hope and luck or light or physical salvation, nor is it merely for nothing that it is considered a female deity by the ancients and moderns alike. Its praises are writ large in the pages of history. "The Crescent is the symbol of the Turkish Empire, hence frequently styled the Empire of the Crescent. It was adopted by the Turks from the early Byzantines. One tradition is that Philip of Macedon,

* The ends of the waxing Crescent are pointed on the left, those of the waning one, on the right.

the father of Alexander the Great, meeting with great difficulty in the siege of Byzantine, set his soldiers to undermine the walls; but a *Crescent* moon discovered the design. The Byzantines afterwards erected a statue to Diana, and the Crescent became the symbol of the state."* "Also an Order of the Crescent was instituted by Charles I of Naples and Sicily in 1268, and revived by René of Anjou in 1464. A Turkish Order or Decoration of the Crescent was instituted by Sultan Selim IV in 1799, in memory of the diamond Crescent which he had presented to Nelson after the battle of the Nile, and which Nelson wore on his coat as if it were an order." In more ancient times still the Bull together with the Crescent and

* Cassel's concised Cyclopædia.

the ansated Cross between its horns and the earth under its astronomical symbol (☥) were the most phallic symbols. The crescent-form Argha of the Greeks was the type of the queen of Heaven—Diana or the Moon. "She was considered the Great Mother of all Existences, as the Sun was the Father."

In the Sassanian and the Parthian periods the Persians inscribed on their coins on all the four points a crescent and a star as emblematic of faith and hope.

Thus the Crescent as an old and venerated symbol has from the very dawn of history been the object of deep reverence and worship. Over and above everything, as we have seen, it is a great symbol of *hope* without which human life would hardly be worth living.

To meditate on this fascinating heavenly orb at the time of its birth, to get inspiration from it and to spur the Ego on to a higher cycle of evolution, ought to be the desire and aim of every thinking soul. So Islam even to-day does not vainly adore this "fair consort of Tithonus old." With its reflected light it shows perennially the path to hope and eternal bliss. May all Islam then be led by the light of this heavenly lamp, burning perennially for the guidance of mankind!

THE CROSS.

"In the Cross is salvation, in the Cross is life. In the Cross is protection from enemies, in the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness. In the Cross is strength of mind, in the Cross joy of spirit. In the Cross the sum of virtue, in the Cross perfection of sanctity. . . . . Walk where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, thou wilt find no higher way above nor safer way below, than the way of the holy Cross."

THOMAS A. KEMPIS.

——:o:——

"It is a cross and a circle truly but it is a Cross on which all the human passions have to be crucified before the Yogi passes through the Strait Gate."

Isis Unveiled.

——:o:——

Exercise yourself to-day, in the holy suffering of your Lord; think of His bitter pains, of His awful desolation, of His sense of shame, of the burden laid upon Him in the weight of your iniquity, and then you will learn to exercise yourself in the example of His holy life. Set your thoughts with all diligence, to consider, *not the mystery (for that is beyond us)*, but the mercy of His cross and passion; and then you will go forth, as taught of Him, to do all, and to bear all for Him; for Him, even to eat and drink, since the body which you nourish is His new creation; for Him to live, because the life of the redeemed does indeed belong to the Redeemer; in Him to die, for that brings you closer to Him in whom you have believed.

CANON JELF,

"Make up for Lost Time."

Daily Light from the Cross.

THE CROSS.

The Cross which was regarded as the most ancient symbol of worship and veneration even by the ancient Aryans and on which Shri Krishna himself was allegorically crucified, has only in later times come to be identified with Christ and Christianity. As the crescent symbolises in the highest measure the human attributes of faith and hope, so does the cross stand for equality, love, virtue and humility to a pre-eminent degree. Christ the Saviour to whom everything was incarnadined in the purple of love and who preferred all his trials and hardships and humiliations to the sceptre and the Crown, Christ who taught mankind 'to resist not evil,' to love one's enemies, to bless those who curse us, to do good to those who hate us and to

pray for them who despitefully use and persecute us, Christ whose spiritual vestment was every virtue that man could conceive, whose sacrifice knew no bounds, and like Gautama who offered his body to the hungry tigress to spare her from the cruel act of devouring her own kits, offered himself to be crucified under the most insulting and humiliating circumstances, this super-man, whom the cant of Nietzsche every day profaned,* descended in his unbounded

* "Ah ye brethren, that God whom I created was human work and human madness like all the Gods." "To me the convalescent would it now be suffering and torment to believe in such phantoms: suffering would it now be to me and humiliation." etc. etc.

"War and courage have done more great things than charity. Not your sympathy, but your bravery had hitherto saved the victims."—

Or is it this: To love those who despise us, and give one's hand to the phantom when it is going to frighten us?

But the awakened one, the knowing one, saith. "Body am I entirely, and nothing more: and soul is only the name of something in the body. (*vide*) Thus spake Zarathustra.—Nietzsche.

humility for the uplifting of mankind as represented by the vertical line of the cross and made his temporary abode here on earth as represented by its horizontal line. Now this holy symbol not only signifies the coming down of the Saviour but it also symbolises in the highest form the circumscription of the divine energy. The very Spirit of God with His infinite potentialities humiliates and narrows Himself here in His temporal abode. It is the crucification and sacrifice not of Christ alone but of the highest Spirit of the Logos. This is God's greatest act of humility which we find embodied in the whole evolution of nature. Thus the great Persian poet Shekh Shadi saw in the heavier scale of a balance the bowing down of the great to the small, as Kalidasa hundreds of years back

traced the great law of humility in entire animate and inanimate creation when he saw "the trees being bent by the abundance of their fruits and clouds brought low whilst teeming with salubrious rain."* Moreover it is here on this Cross that mankind is required to crucify all its sins and passions, to follow the law of its great Law-Giver and unruffled by any accidents of life to show as much of humility as possible both to the great and the small.

Now this Cross which we to-day find identified with Christ, the church and Christianity, was first symbolised as a divine sign in the East and particularly in India. But before we explore the forgotten realms of antiquity I will set

* Sakuntala by Kalidasa.

out some of the aspects of the holy Cross in the following order :—

1. It is a universal symbol.
2. It is a symbol of great antiquity.
3. It is a symbol of protective power.
4. It is a symbol of saving power.
5. It is a symbol of future life or "life to come."
6. It is a symbol of prosperity.
7. It is a symbol of good luck.
8. It is a symbol of longevity.
9. It is a symbol of happiness.
10. It is a symbol of protection.
11. It is a symbol of humility.
12. It is a symbol of equality.
13. It is a veritable T
14. It was the symbol of Vishnu, Krishna and then Christ.

15. Its four points symbolise the different directions.
16. Its points symbolise the four elements.
17. Its four points symbolise birth, life, death and immortality.
18. It symbolises the wheel of evolution by itself without the circle.
19. It is a symbol of God.

Now the Cross was not only a universal symbol but it is a symbol that has come down to us from the remotest antiquity. Whatever importance the followers of Christ may attach to the worship of the Cross by connecting it with the crucification of their Savour Jesus, it existed as a religions symbol for centuries before the birth of Christ, and was largely used and worshipped as such by the Egyptians, the Persians,

the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Tibetians, the Chinese and many other ancient races in almost all parts of the world.

It is the oldest religious symbol that has ever been "invented" by the human mind. Traces of worship of the Cross can be found even amongst the pre-historic aborigines of the old and the new worlds. The ancient Egyptians, says Swami Abhedânanda, used the Tau Cross, which is like the English letter T. In the Egyptian hieroglyphics, the cross has been interpreted variously; for instance a Cross with four equal arms has been supposed to mean the four elements. "When the form of the Cross was composed of two or four sceptres with a circle at the point of interception, it is said to indicate 'divine potentiality.'"

It stood sometimes for protective power, sometimes "for life to come etc." We also find that some of the Egyptian deities, as Ra, Ammona Ra and Ammon had their sacred "Tau Crosses" in their hands. The Cross was used by the Egyptian in tattooing the body, in the paintings of the walls and tombs at Thebes. A long cross surmounting a heart, meaning good or goodness, was fixed upon the fronts of the houses in Thebes and Memphis, intimating "This is the abode of the good." The Egyptian symbols of the five planets had a cross connected with each, whereas the natives of Abyssinia used to observe certain religious rites by plunging a cross in the river Gitche."* Again the cross in an-

* The Word and the Cross in Ancient India by Swami Abhedananda.

cient India was used as a symbol of long life, happiness, luck and prosperity. The most ancient Cross known to history was called the Svastika* which exactly resembled a Greek cross but had its arms bent at right angles. From the Sanskrit word Su meaning 'well', and Asti meaning 'being' it came to be represented as a sign of welfare and well being. In modern prints, sculptures, carricatures and fresco-representations of India we still find its representation in a marked degree. Long before Buddha was born the word Svastika was in existence in the Sanskrit language. We find written in the Rig Veda 'Swasti mé Indra,' meaning O Indra, grant me welfare. The God Vishnu as the Pre-

* Note that one of the Yoga-*asanas* or postures is the *Svastika*-âsana.—(A. G. Acharya.)

server of the World appears with Svastika in his hands. It was on this Svastikā that we allegorically read of Vishnu and Krishna crucified like Christ. On the Buddhistic coins, in their inscriptions, as well as in the very foot-prints of Buddha we find the Svastikā inscribed. The Stupas (tombs) of the Buddhists were built in the shape of a Svastikā or a Cross. The Elephanta caves near Bombay are carved in the shape of a huge Cross and the figure of Tri-Mürti representing the Hindu Trinity has in its hands a Cross. The temple of Vishnu at Benares was also built in the shape of an immense cross, which was unfortunately destroyed by Aurungzebe and a mosque set up in its place. We also find the pagodas of Mathura built in the form of the

holy Cross.* In ancient times houses too were built in the shape of the Svastikā. The cross-legged posture of the sitting of the Sanyasis and the Sadhus is known as the Svastikā-posture which is supposed to give immunity from all temptations and dangers. Again Svastikā represents the wheel of evolution. Its arms bent at right angles indicate motion. Also from time immemorial the wheel or circle and the cross are inseparably associated with each other, the circle representing the Spirit of Life and Immortality or Wisdom and Infinity. The Cross as a religious symbol was introduced from India in Thibet, China, Japan, Korea, Burma,

* The human body, with the two hands outstretched becomes the Cross and all Hindu temples represent the Divine Heart in the Sanctum Sanctorum, and hands and legs projected (A. G. Acharya.)

Ceylon and Java. In China and Japan the statues of Buddha are marked with a Svastikā, in Thibet the Cross is still the royal emblem of the Bonpa deities, and the Lamas use a cross at the time of benediction. The three steps out of the six of the pre-historic temples of Java were invariably in the form of a cross and in the ancient Hindu paintings we find Krishna with a cross in his hand and Yama, the lord of the dead, also holds in his hands a big cross. That the cross existed at least 3000 years before Christ can be proved also from the archeological finds in the forests of Central India, where two rude stone Crosses have been discovered in the excavations. Four hundred years before Christ was born a Svastikā mark was imprinted on the sheep and cattle of India and its most frequent mention

is made in the Sanskrit grammar of Panini written more than 400 years before the birth of the Christian Saviour. As a mark of good omen a Svastikā even to-day is painted on the walls of the bed-room of a newly married couple. The very first page of a Hindu's account book is painted with the Svastika-mark before the praises of Brahama are hymned or written. The dualistic worshippers of Vishnu, called the Vaishnavas, mark even to-day a "Y"-shaped cross of distinction on their fore-head. On the Hindu coins of the pre-historic period, on walls, rugs and earthenware, on the garments of the priests, on the old Christians' tombs and catacombs we find the imprint of a Svastikā distinctly marked. This Svastikā, according to the ancient archæologists, travelled during the Bronze age

from the East to the West, whereas Professor Wilson in his essay read before the Smithsonian Institute expressed his belief that the Svastikā migrated from Asia to America. Even from the most ancient records handed down to posterity we find that the cross was the most ancient religious symbol of the Hindus. "Not only this, but the earliest record of the sacrifice of a divine man in space is to be found in the Rig Veda described in mythological language. John P. Lundy in his "Monumental Christianity" says: At any rate the religion of India had its mythical crucified victim long anterior to Christianity. . . . I am disposed to believe this to be the victim described in the Vedas themselves. We read in the Rig Veda: 'The first-born being, before the beginning of the material phenomena, became a victim of

sacrifice. The Devas, gods and angels, who came later, took the first-born being for the animal of sacrifice, fastened him to a sacrificial post, sanctified him and afterwards sacrificed him, stretching his limbs in the eternal space. From that sacrifice arose all that exists on earth and in the heavens.' * Thus we find the cross not only a universal symbol but also a symbol of great antiquity, having had its origin in the mysterious East. In a similar manner the cross in Egypt "was used as a protecting talisman and a symbol of *saving power*." "Typhon or Satan is actually found chained to and bound with the cross. In the Ritual, the Osirian cries, "The Apophis is overthrown, their cords bind the South, North, East

* "The Word and the Cross" by Svami Abhedânannda. For much valuable information I am indebted to this learned Svami's book.—J. D. S.

and West, their cords are on him." Now these were the cords of the four quarters or the cross. Thor is said to smite the head of the serpent with his hammer.....a form of Svastikā or four-footed cross..... ..... In the primitive sepulchres of Egypt the model of the chamber had the form of a cross."* That the Svastikā is to be found all throughout the world can be known from the fact that "the four arms of the X, or decussated cross, and of the Hermetic cross, pointing to the four cardinal points were well understood by the mystical minds of the Hindus, the Brâhmans and the Buddhists, hundreds of years before it was heard of in Europe. They used to bend the ends of the Cross and made of it their

* "Secret Doctrines" Vol. 11, P. 621 and 622.

Svastikā which is now the Wan of the Mongolian Buddhists. In its mystic sense it implies that the "central point" is not limited to one individual, however perfect, that the Principle (God) is in humanity, and Humanity, as all the rest, is in *It*, like drops of water are in the ocean, the four ends being towards the four cardinal points, hence losing themselves in infinity."* That the cross was known long before Christ can be deduced from the fact that we find Ezekiel stamping the foreheads of the men of Judah who feared the Lord with the signum Thau or with a cross inclined a little towards the right. We also find Moses ordering his people to mark their door posts and lintels with blood in the shape of a Tau which was identical with

* Secret Doctrines.

the handled cross of the Egyptians, lest the "Lord God" may make a mistake and smite some of his own chosen people instead of the doomed Egyptians. In the sculptured ruins at Philx we find Horus raising the dead with a cross in the shape of a Tau in his hand. The ansated Egyptian cross or the Tau, the Jaina (or Hindu) cross or the Svastikā and the Christian Cross have all the same theological meaning and significance. The cross likewise was always inseparable from the circle of infinitude and wisdom, for the Eastern Initiates have always contemplated it as coeval with the circle of Deific Infinitude. The most sacred cross of Egypt that was carried in the hands of the gods, the Pharaohs and the mummified dead is the Ankh ☥, which signifies "the sign of life, the living, an oath, the covenant.

The top of this is the hieroglyphic Ru which means the door, gate, the place of outlet—the signification of which is the "Strait gate that leads to the kingdom of Heaven." Materially "it is a cross and a circle truly but it is a cross on which all the human passions have to be crucified before the Yogi passes through the Strait Gate." The Cross and the Circle were once deemed to be inseparable, like matter and spirit and body and soul, but afterwards they came to be regarded as interchangeable. Thus we find the "Chakra" or the disk of Vishnu denoting the circling, wheeling round, periodicity or the wheel of time. This chakra Vishnu uses as a weapon of punishment and hurls it at his enemy. In like manner we find Thor throwing his Flyflot, a form of four-footed cross (Svastikā). This

cross which was first used as a Christian symbol in the days of the Emperor Constantine "was borrowed from the solar-*wheel* of the Gaulish Sun-god-worshippers who formed the mass of the successful emperor's legionaries."* Likewise we find the circle of eternity, infinitude and wisdom as symbolised by the dragoon of the Chinese coeval with the Cross.

Thus if we in our wisdom can but crucify our passions as the Saviour did for his children or humiliate ourselves as He in His infinite potentialities did by compassing His illimitable divine energies in the dross of matter for the higher evolution of entire animate kingdom in general and mankind in particular, then the understanding of the symbology

* "Origin of the Idea of God" by Grant Allen.

of the cross and the circle will not be in vain. To presume to know the infinite with a finite mind or to measure the immeasurable is but a vulgar dream of the faddist. We have only been gifted with faith and taught reverence and humility. To love, to be wise, to be pure and to be faithful are the cardinal dictates of the four great religions of Christianity, Hinduism, (*i. e.* Vedism), Zoroastrianism and Mahomedanism. The divine love which means ultimate monism and the oneness of all animate and inanimate things; wisdom which is the knowledge of the Divine, Its will and Its laws, whose parent was Thought from which has evolved the entire cosmos—the visualised symbol of the Thinker who is both unseeable and unseen—and Whom we call the Spirit ot the Logos; Purity,

which in its physical essence we best see reflected in the fire, which is the materialised symbol of that which Strabo calls "the divine Something"; and faith which means belief in His existence, wisdom and justice and in which alone lies ultimate human salvation, these and all other inexplicable mysteries are enough to benumb the ganglionic cells of our little human brain and which Ernst Haeckel in his reckless denunciation † calls the seat of the *soul* both destructible and mortal instead of Imperishable and Immortal.*

† Vide Haeckel's "The Riddle of the Universe" and "The Wonders of Life."

Among thoughtful physicians the conviction that the existence of the soul came to an end at death has been common for centuries. Generally, however, they refrained from giving it expression. Moreover, the empirical science of the brain remained so imperfect during the last century that the soul could continue to be regarded as its mysterious inhabitant. It was the gigantic progress of biology in the present century and especially in the latter half of the century,

that finally destroyed the myth. The establishment of the theory of descent and the cellular theory, the astounding discoveries of ontogeny and experimental physiology—above all the marvellous progress of the microscopic anatomy of the brain—gradually deprived athanatism of every basis ; now indeed, it is rarely that an informed and honourable biologist is found to defend the immortality of the soul. All the monistic philosophers of the century (Strauss, Fever-bach, Buchmer, Spencer, etc.) are thanatists. The Riddle of the Universe.

* Read "Life and Matter" by Sir Oliver Lodge and "After Death What ?" by Lombroso, etc. The First is a direct attack on his "The Riddle of the Universe" and the second scientifically proves the entity of the soul and its survival after death. Both, I am sure, are acknowledged throughout the civilised world as "honourable biologists" and scientists of great eminence.

J. D. S.

CONCLUSION.

With chips of the fragrant sandal wood in my hands I bow down before the Holy Fire and conjure the smoke to carry this fervent message to my Lord, that man may contemplate upon righteousness through the holy fire and purge himself of his sins, that however humble his birth or beginning he may emulate the lotus, purify his baser self and strive to face unfaltering the exuberant glory of Brahma, that however cruel his destiny he may become hopeful as the crescent and that he may cheerfully carry the cross of his burdens as Christ did for the good of mankind. And finally may he become the indiscerptible Lotus for the Lord always to dwell therein !

THRICE HALLOWED BE THY NAME !

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